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An Investigation of the Implementation of School Reforms and Autonomy in Italian Schools, 1997-2000: Perceptions of School-Based Education Communities and Policy Makers Regarding Adoption and Implementation of Reforms in Italian Schools

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The Italian experience is unique, even among its European counterparts. While the Italian Constitution, now over 50 years old, made provision for autonomy at the local levels of government and education, it has taken five decades for autonomy in practice to trickle down to local entities. In the case of schools, autonomy was mandated via legislation in 1997. Additional legislation followed that addressed specifics to permit implementation of autonomy and related reforms. The Italians, however, face more than the usual uncertainty regarding the forward motion of their autonomy and reform movement. This study has raised as many questions as it attempted to answer.

INTRODUCTION AND RELATED LITERATURE

The Educational System

The Italian Ministry of Public Education is comprised of the central administration and local administration. It provides direction for educational policy, determines curriculum, and monitors the schools. The Ministry develops "circolari," or position papers, which assist in guiding legislation. All changes in educational policy and practice are determined by the legislature (Parliament), which is comprised of Senators and Deputies.

At the level of the central administration, the Ministry is responsible for providing services concerning pre-school education, primary education, secondary education, and art schools. It provides the following functions: coordinates school activities in accordance with the national educational objectives; promotes the dissemination of training and education by means of conferences, exhibitions, support and rewards for publications, studies, and research activities; and conducts surveillance and administrative duties as stated in relevant legislation (www.istruzione.it).

Local administration operates at two levels – regional and provincial. Italy is divided into 20 regions, and each region is comprised of provinces. The Regional School Office or Ufficio scolastico regionale is located in the main city of each region and, in compliance with the Minister's guidelines, manages public examination procedures to recruit teaching and local administrative staff, sets the school calendar for the region, and deals with any other business as established in the Testo Unico. The head of the office is the Sovrintendente scolastico (School Superintendent) (www.istruzione.it).

The Provincial School Office or Provveditorato agli studi is located in the main city of each province. The head of the office is the Provveditore agli studi (Provincial Director of Education). In accordance with guidelines established by the Minister, he/she rules over pre-school, primary, lower and upper secondary education, and art schools. The

Provveditore ensures that laws and regulations are correctly implemented in both the public and private education sectors. The Provveditore also has the power to suspend classes temporarily in case of emergency.

Additional functions include promoting and coordinating initiatives and measures aimed at enhancing the efficiency of education and for responding to any other business as established in the Testo Unico (www.istruzione.it).

While structures noted above have functions that assist in the governing and support of schools, in actuality little infrastructure existed at the initiation of the latest wave of reforms that would facilitate the introduction and implementation of the scope and range of nationally legislated changes.

The Italian Reform Movement

The Italian experience is unique, even among its European counterparts. While the Italian Constitution, now over 50 years old, made provision for autonomy at the local levels of government and education, it has taken five decades for autonomy in practice to trickle down to local entities. In the case of schools, autonomy was mandated via legislation in 1997. Additional legislation followed that addressed specifics to permit implementation of autonomy and related reforms.

Law n. 59/1997 authorized the Government to confer to regions, provinces, and local levels more autonomous decision making. This law provided for the reform of public administration and for administrative simplification for the purpose of promoting local development, including permitting more local discretion over the disposition of funds within schools (Falanga, 2001a; Falanga, 2001b). Responsibility for evaluating school outcomes, determining and assigning financial resources to staff at "scholastic institutions," and running military and non-community-based schools was retained at the State level.

The main points of the reforms initially proposed in 1996 related to autonomy and school renewal. The Reform Law itself had three major components: one, to decentralize or bring more autonomy to the schools; two, to transform the schools from a three-stage education to a two-stage education (excluding the maternal schools); and three, to determine curricula that both fit with a two-stage system and provided students with the necessary understandings, skills, and performances for the new century as a global partner.

The objectives included strengthening the administrative, organizational, and pedagogical autonomy of the school; improving the conditions of functioning of school delivery; simplifying and decentralizing administrative activity; setting up the structure of a system for professional teacher training; restoring the effectiveness of student and family participation in the school life; enriching the school offerings with complementary initiatives and integrated activities; fostering the benefits of study and opposing unsuccessful school study; and linking the school with the university.

The main components of the reforms proposed to address objectives above included professional administrative and teacher preparation, both in-service and pre-service; instituting practices related to school autonomy, decentralization, and administrative simplification; introducing complementary initiatives and integrated activities for students; focusing on drop-out prevention and "recovery" of unsuccessful students; experimenting with innovations related to school organization and pedagogies; and instituting local budgeting and local administration of expenditures.

In order to ensure the professional preparation of administrators and teaching personnel, new guidelines were instituted. These included mandated programs for sitting principals and new requirements for elementary school teachers, who previously had received no university pre-service training. At the present, preschool and elementary school teachers must pursue a 4-year university course in their subject, then pass a selection test or attend a 2-year postgraduate specialization school. At the onset of the reform movement, administrators, who previously had been promoted from the teacher ranks with no additional training, were bureaucratic managers, not educational leaders.

While a new State curriculum was developed to respond to the need for a modernized instructional program, at school levels, principals and teaching staff were also granted greater latitude in terms of experimenting with innovative practices and conducting on-site research. One of the objectives of the reforms was to reduce the national curriculum to 80-85% of the total, with 15-20% reverting to decisions at the level of the school.

Prior to the reforms, approximately 20-30% of students withdrew ("dropped-out") from school between 10th and 11th grades. Of the approximately 70% that did graduate, 50% of those tended to pursue additional schooling in vocational schools or university; however, many did not finish their postsecondary education or took an extended time to complete their studies. Reform of the university system was also one of the targets of the reform package in attempts to ensure higher university completion rates and to mitigate against the challenge that Italian youth have had historically in becoming a part of the mainstream economy.

The Italians document in their literature a variety of rationales for their reforms, including improving comparisons with other systems in Europe (the reason the government gives); providing a more flexible system relative to transition to the work market; renewing curriculum; and transitioning students more quickly into the labor market (a political consideration) to provide opportunities for competition in European markets.

Comparisons of Schooling Before and After Reforms

In the previous system, school configuration was a four-tiered system: scuola materna (preschool, ages 3-5 for 3 years), elementare (elementary, ages 6-11 for 5 years), media (middle school, ages 12-14 for 3 years), and superiore (high/secondary school, ages 15-19 years for 5 years). Secondary school provided choices from among six types of education: liceo classico (classical curriculum including Old Greek and Latin); liceo scientifico (scientific curriculum); liceo linguistico (emphasis on study of at least three European languages); liceo artistico (curriculum centered around the fine arts); istituto tecnico (courses including accounting, agriculture, computer science, etc.); and istituto professionale (career-oriented courses in fields of social services, tourism, hotel management, graphic arts, etc.).

The new system, which was due to be implemented in the fall of 2001, was three-tiered: scuola dell'infanzia (preschool, ages 3-5 for 3 years); scuola di base (base or elementary school, ages 6-13 for 7 years), and ciclo secondario (secondary or high school, ages 14-18, for 3-5 years - separated into 2 phases, 2 years for orientation and up to 3 years for completion of high school course). Career streams were reduced to five categories: classico, scientifico, musicale, artistico, and tecnico.

This restructuring involved not only a restructuring of school configuration but also a reduction of one year of schooling, from 13 years to 12 years, excluding preschool; it

also involved raising the compulsory age from 14 to 15, which represents the completion of the equivalent of 9th grade. (Some reformers had hoped to raise the compulsory age to 16.)

RERSEARCH QUESTIONS

In the interest of gathering ongoing data to assess the progress of the reform movement in Italy, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What progress has been made in schools as they move into the early stages of implementation of autonomy? In what specific areas?
2. What have the government and different levels of the educational system – the Ministry, regions, provinces, local entities, and individual schools – done to prepare for, facilitate, and support the implementation of autonomy?
3. To what extent and in what ways have capacity factors identified in Phase I of the research served to facilitate the adoption and implementation of autonomy?
4. To what extent and in what ways have barriers identified in Phase I of the research impacted adoption and first-level implementation of autonomy?
5. What new barriers have been identified based on attempts to adopt and implement autonomy?
6. How congruent are views of autonomy between and among policy makers, legislators, practitioners (administrators/teachers) and social forces (parents/community members)?
7. What new needs have emerged as the initiative begins moving from Phase I (legislation of autonomy) to Phase II (implementation)?

METHOD

Sample

The sample was comprised of two distinct groups, school-based educational communities (school-site respondents) and national policy makers. For school-based communities, questionnaires were prepared for dissemination in six elementary schools within each of four regions in Italy: Lazio (Rome area), Lombardy (Milan area), Tuscany (Florence area), and Sicily (Palermo area). These four regions represented a cross-section of Italy geographically, from the far north to the far south. From each school, 11 respondents considered a sample of "school-based communities" were requested to complete questionnaires: the principal, the administrative assistant, six teachers, two parents, and a person from the community who had a rapport and an interaction with the school.

Upon completion of the data collection phase, the sample included 23 elementary schools, six from Sicily, seven from Lombardy, five from Tuscany, and five from Lazio. Most schools generally delivered as requested relative to the distribution of the 11 respondents (except for Lazio). Some confusion with the Lazio group resulted in collection of data from a school in Puglia and a school in Lombardy. The group from Lombardy was aggregated with the larger Lombardy group, and the school in Puglia was included in the Lazio group. Lazio was under-represented in the sample and Lombardy, slightly over-represented. One school from Tuscany did not return questionnaires.

In the case of the policy makers, the sample was expanded for the second phase of the research. All but one person interviewed for the first phase of the research (Ferrara, 1998, 1999) was invited to complete a survey. Additional individuals involved in policy making relative to the reform movement were also asked to complete questionnaires. These included a provincial superintendent, an author of numerous publications on the reforms, several professors at the University of Florence, and several school administrators who also taught university courses in education.

Data Collection

Data were collected from November 13, 2000, through February 2001. Data from the schools were collected in a variety of ways. In Sicily and in Lombardy, my principal contacts arranged school visitations. A presentation regarding the research was made, and the group then completed the questionnaires. Any questions that arose were addressed. I departed these schools with the questionnaires in hand.

My contact in Rome felt that my presence was not required in the schools and preferred to use contacts available to him. I was given two contacts in Florence (Tuscany). One contact in Florence selected four schools to participate. One of the schools was a school where he served as principal; he arranged for dissemination and return of the questionnaires. With one principal, arrangements were made over the telephone. I met with the other two principals to explain the research. In one case, I administered the questionnaires. Questionnaires were returned from three of these four schools. The second contact, responsible for two schools in the center of Florence, arranged for the principals, husband and wife, to return the questionnaires via mail.

Such inconsistencies of administration must be understood within the context of the Italian experience with empirical data collection. For the most part, Italians are unaccustomed to completing questionnaires. My knowledge of this necessitated opting for cultural sensitivity over the exercise of "rigorous" standards expected of American researchers that ensure minimization of error and optimization of validity and reliability by standardizing administration of questionnaires. There was no graceful way around this issue except to accept the conditions put upon me regarding the collection of data from school sites.

My prior research in Italy, conducted in 1997-1998, had taught me a valuable lesson. The component related to policy maker interviews was conducted smoothly through contacts within Italy in April of 1998. Once contacts were made, I personally interviewed each of the people selected for inclusion in the policy maker sample (Ferrara, 1998, 1999).

Surveying school teams via mail distribution was not successful. Of 1,000 questionnaires that were mailed to Italy in the fall of 1997 for distribution by contacts within Italy, only 40 questionnaires were returned to me. The people responsible for disseminating the questionnaires – one at the elementary level, one at the middle school level, and one at the high school level – were nationally regarded movers in education, responsible, serious, and very much interested in facilitating the research. The problem lay at the level of perceptions of individuals within schools and lack of knowledge about the research process.

Measures

School-based communities and the other for use by policy makers developed two parallel questionnaires for implementation of this study, one for use. (See Appendix for the school-based form.)

The questionnaires contain both multiple choice items and opened-ended questions. Each questionnaire contained items that sought information on perceived priority areas, national and school-level, for the reform movement; the stage that had been reached in addressing these priority areas; the types of assistance given to schools to support implementation of reforms; factors associated with the capacity of an organization to grow and change; obstacles encountered that impact reform efforts; and perceptions of autonomy. The policy makers' form contained only one column in the first set of questions – for their perceptions of national needs. Four open-ended questions that were contained in the school-based education community questionnaire were rephrased to query views of policy makers relative to any experiences with schools. In the demographic section, school/community members were asked for their region, name of school, role, and years of contact with school (principal, teachers, and parents); policy makers were asked for their names, where they lived, where they worked, and their positions.

Open-ended questions sought personal responses to issues of 1) challenges, questions, and difficulties as participants entered the reform effort; 2) positive experiences of respondents with innovation and autonomy; 3) perceptions regarding the advantages of autonomy; and 4) any other comments respondents would care to share regarding autonomy and school reforms. A short demographic section collected information in the school-based version on region, the name of the school, the role of the respondent, and the number of years that the respondent had enjoyed in terms of his role (for the principal, the teachers, and the parents).

All items – closed-ended and open-ended - were designed with the results of the first phase of the research in mind. The domain of responses generated in the previous study became the template for this study, in order to determine whether issues raised or perceptions held in anticipation of implementation of the reforms were extant or had been modified as reforms were being implemented.

While the study necessitated generation of only univariate statistics, the researcher was secondarily interested in determining if relationships existed between and among factors studied and if differences existed between and among groups (regions, individual schools, and respondents' roles). The data were also subjected to certain psychometric investigations. While it was not possible to factor analyze the 109 items that represented domains of priority (n=26), improvements addressed (n=13), capacity (n=25), obstacles (n=30), and autonomy (n=15) with the sample size of 217, it was possible to assess scale reliabilities. The support domain (types of assistance provided by nine entities/agencies) permitted multiple responses for each item; results were used for descriptive purposes only.

The reliability coefficients for each of the domains were determined to be of sufficient value for use in correlation and analysis of variance procedures. Alpha coefficients of reliability for the sample were as follows: Priority/Nation (.86), Priority/School (.89), Priority Actual/Progress of Reform (.82), Capacity (.90), Obstacles (.91), and Autonomy (.82).

Content validity was assumed to have been satisfied based on the manner in which the quantitative items were generated. Items were generated from the domain of responses determined from a prior study that investigated policy makers' perceptions of the adoption of autonomy and other reforms (Ferrara, 1998, 1999). The policy makers from the former study have had an influence on the design and eventual implementation of Italian reforms. Many also were integrally involved in training teachers and/or administrators for their new

roles. Items were congruent with current literature published in recent years in Italian journals. This professional literature has consistently identified the factors that would both support and thwart reform efforts in Italy.

A noted professor of education and department chair at Catholic University of the Sacred Heart-Milan, who also serves as the editor of the national journal Dirigenti Scuola for school administrators, reviewed the questionnaire utilized in the study for content and accuracy. The same professor served as the translator for the questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

For variables measuring priority areas, capacity, obstacles to change, and autonomy, item means, item standard deviations, item frequencies and percentages, category means, and category standard deviations were run. Alpha reliabilities were calculated for the three priority area scales and the scales measuring capacity, obstacles to change, and autonomy. For the section on the contribution of different entities to the implementation of the reforms, frequencies and percentages were calculated. For demographic data, frequencies and percentages were calculated for regions, school site, stakeholders' role (in the practitioner version). Means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were calculated for questions related to number of years the principal, teachers, and parents had held their roles relative to the school being surveyed. Demographic data for the policy makers were content analyzed. A mean substitution was used for missing data in all Likert-type items for both groups in order to provide sufficient cases for ancillary analyses, including correlations and Analysis of Variance.

Content analysis was utilized for the four open-ended questions that sought information on the respondents' views on: 1) challenges, questions, and difficulties related to implementation of reforms and autonomy; 2) positive experiences with innovation and autonomy; 3) advantages of autonomy; and 4) other comments related to autonomy and reform.

Subgroup analyses were also conducted. Subgroups included region, role, and school site.

Correlations were run to determine relationships between and among measures of priority (general, school, and actual), capacity, obstacles, and autonomy. Analysis of variance was used to determine whether differences relative to the six categories mentioned above were significantly different based on region, school site, or role. Tamhane's T2, at a significance level of .05, was used as a post hoc test. Tamhane provides a conservative pair wise comparison when variances are not equal. Establishing equal variances was most problematic in the case of comparisons of the 23 schools.

For each respondent, open-ended questions were also rated based on the richness of the response.
Responses were rated on a scale of 0 to 4, with '0' representing no response, '1' representing one or two thoughts or sentences, '2' representing a somewhat developed response, '3' representing a more fully developed response, and '4' representing a well-developed and comprehensive response. Zero responses were eliminated in calculating the mean of each item.

In addition to the formally collected data, short informal interviews, ranging from 30 to 90 minutes were conducted with several policy makers. Noted also were the

comments, reactions, and body language of all respondents that the researcher had access to. These included subjects from 13 of the 23 schools (six in Sicily, six in the Milan area, one in Tuscany) as well as many of the policy makers who, in addition to completing questionnaires, also wanted to dialogue about the reform movement.

I was also given current professional materials by five people: the editor of Dirigenti Scuola, the president of AIMC (Association of Catholic School Teachers), the president of ANP (National Association of School Directors), a leading Jesuit journalist who had recently published a book on school reform in Italy, and a lead professor in the School of Education at the University of Florence. These materials were surveyed to be able to integrate current topics, themes, and trends into findings and implications and to determine the extent to which information was readily available to school practitioners. In effect, these materials were considered part of the data collected during the course of the study, as was any information acquired from the Web, including legal and technical information from the Ministry of Public Education Web site (www.istruzione.it).

REFLECTIVE NOTES FROM SITE VISITATIONS

There was variability in terms of respondents' difficulty in making their way through the questionnaire. In general, respondents had difficulty with the first question, Part A. It seems that greater clarity for respondents might have been afforded if Part B had been presented first followed by Part A. The hypothetical nature of Part A seemed to "throw" the subjects, most frequently the teachers and parents. Principals felt that the instructions were clear; principals understood what was meant by the hypothetical of assigning priority to the 13 items presented in Part A.

Some groups agonized over completing the questionnaire. One respondent finally asked, "Is it better just to go through this more quickly?" I responded, "Yes."

Frequently, responding to the questionnaire became a group activity. At times, one respondent would look at the questionnaire of a respondent sitting next to her. (These were almost exclusively women responding as the school level of interest was elementary, and in Italy almost all elementary school teachers are female.) Especially enlightening was the occasion of the assistant to the principal looking to a teacher for responses.

One advantage of this group method of response noted was that the teachers generated more ideas than they would have responding individually. Ideas would spin off each other in a way that is normally considered advantageous when problem-solving in a school setting or collecting qualitative information.

By and large, the teachers were unaware of most of the training information and materials available to them. Many teachers expressed confusion over the various components of the reform and said they had no idea how to implement the various strands of the reform. Additionally, it appeared that many had difficulty understanding how to integrate various elements of the reform package.

On the other hand, principals appeared to be in control and in various ways communicated their understanding of the reform elements. Some of the principals were or had been directly involved with the "aggiornamento" or training associated with preparing the schools for the various changes that have been passed into law.

Parents seemed to lack understanding of what goes on in schools. While the parents appeared to be well known to the principals and I suspect that the parents who

participated in the research were selected for their ties to and support of the school, nevertheless many parents said that it was almost impossible for them to answer many of the questions, as they did not have the information.

Italy has a more recent history of "hands off" regarding parent participation in the education of their children. Parents are expected to provide moral education at home, and the school is expected to provide "istruzione" or technical knowledge and to prepare students for their professional entry into society. Children are encouraged to be children and to enjoy their childhood. Little pressure appears to be put on them for independence, as is the case with American children.

While this approach has many advantages (Americans do complain that their children are in such a rush to grow up), on the other hand, in the teen-age years and into early adulthood, there are residual effects that actually create some of the very problems the Italians are trying to solve. Many people in their early twenties are unemployed in Italy, being supported by their families. While the unemployment rate is relatively high in Italy, more so in the south than in the north, it is difficult to determine whether this is an artifact of unavailable jobs; the result of a lack of congruence between educational preparation, technical programs, and work place realities; or a social acceptance of young people entering the workforce later in Italy than in most industrialized societies.

Despite everything, all participants were welcoming and ultimately cooperative. Italians are fond of debate and challenging ideas, which occurred in some of the administration sessions. However, by the end of each session, no matter how combative respondents had been during the administration of the questionnaire, all sessions ended well with handshakes, wishes for success with the research, and the traditional polite Italian farewells.

Some sessions were physically exhausting and others left me exhilarated. Just as it was difficult for respondents to approach the task of completing the questionnaires using the normal objectivity that quantitative researchers try to design into their studies, it was at times difficult for me not to feel some emotions regarding the challenges before me. The way in which the research was conducted – going to schools at the request of the principals or at the insistence of those organizing the school sites – provided a new perspective on the administration of questionnaires. Ordinarily, when a researcher utilizes questionnaires, the researcher is not privy to the reactions and difficulties experienced by respondents, unless the respondent makes a comment on the questionnaire or includes correspondence of some sort.

The presence of open-ended questions and the fact that I personally administered more than half of the surveys (in 13 of 23 schools or 56.5%) meeting with groups, explaining the research to them, and in most cases guiding them through the questionnaire, provided another perspective regarding the research.

Also, the inclusion of policy makers – various "movers and shakers" in the movement, in terms of creating policy, serving as legislators who passed the reform laws, designing and implementing training venues, teaching education courses in university, serving as school principals while also teaching at university and/or writing technical educational books on methods both for teachers and administrators – helped to put the teachers' plight in perspective. The policy makers, in informal conversations, confirmed my observations that there was a lack of communication and information filtering down to the teachers.

One policy maker, an ex-school inspector and presently a consultant, reflected that she felt that many of the present principals were looking to retire, so overwhelmed are they by the prospect of what lies ahead. It is possible that many teachers who are near retirement will also look for ways to retire as soon as possible rather than face all of the changes that have descended on the schools.

Most of the policy makers, while supporting the reforms, had grave doubts about their success, at least in the immediate future. The major reaction was, "We will see." Most of the policy makers felt that Ministry officials and legislators don't understand the culture of schools. While this view is perhaps an oversimplification, given the fact that some people in the Ministry, as well as in the Parliament, are ex-school personnel, this view does assist in putting the frustration of the practitioners in some perspective. A major theme among practitioners and policy makers alike was "Too much too soon." Also, more recent policy directions of the new government, elected several months after the collection of the data for this study, are casting a shadow on the reforms put in place since 1997.

LIMITATIONS

This sample was limited to the study of elementary school-based communities and policy makers that were known to the researcher. In the case of the school-based communities, the sample represented an average of 9.4 respondents from each of 23 schools included in the data analysis from the four regions of Italy. While the sample represents a geographical cross-section of Italy by region, the sample cannot be purported to be representative. And while there was a distribution across regions of urban, suburban, and rural school settings, there is no guarantee that these schools represent all elementary schools in Italy. Additionally, there were unequal numbers of respondents across regions or schools. (See Summary of Findings, Sample Characteristics for details.) Finally, while principals were requested to provide a "representative sample" within each school, that is, to include proponents as well as critics from among teachers and parents, there was no way of guaranteeing that this type of representative sample was delivered.

In retrospect, one scale may have caused a limitation in terms of precision of measurement. In order to offer no more than five choices for Likert-type scales and to provide the opportunity for respondents to indicate that they did not know the response to the obstacle items, based on the assumption that parents may not have access to information regarding obstacles to change, only four quantifiable responses were provided: never, a little, somewhat, and a lot. Providing a response option between 'somewhat' and 'a lot' would have permitted a more precise measurement of these items.

Additionally, in some cases I administered the surveys, making a short presentation and then waiting while the groups completed the surveys. When questions arose during the administration, I was present to clarify any confusion. This was the case in the six schools in Sicily, the six schools in Lombardy, and the one in Tuscany. It is difficult to know whether my presence or my assistance influenced the responses of participants in a significant way.

In the case of Lazio, the president of a national teacher association coordinated the dissemination of the questionnaires. I had no contact with the schools or the respondents. In the case of Tuscany, I met with principals in Carrara and Avenza to review the questionnaire; I had access to only one group. The principal of a school in Marina di Massa contacted me by phone when there were questions concerning the questionnaire. I did not

have access to this group. The principal of another elementary school in Carrara arranged the administration of the surveys. A University of Florence contact arranged finding two schools in the center of Florence to participate and communicated directions to the principals. I either mailed questionnaires to the schools or hand delivered them to contacts in Tuscany.

The means of distribution and dissemination raise the question of consistency of administration. Since I was obligated to defer to the means by which my contacts in each region wished to coordinate the effort, there could be no design control for anomalies that might arise from inconsistent dissemination of questionnaires, variations in clarification of directions, and collection of the data.

When constructing the section in the questionnaire on agency support, I failed to consider the contribution of professional associations and organizations that often publish educational information and materials. Professional associations should have been one of the entities included in this section.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section contains a summary of the findings. (See Appendix for tables of findings of sample, four regions, and policy makers.)

School-Based Education Community Sample Characteristics

There were 217 usable questionnaires from the school-based sample. Respondents from Lazio accounted for 13.8%; from Lombardy, 32.7%; from Sicily, 29.0%; and from Tuscany, 24.4%. Teachers accounted for the greatest number of respondents (56.7%), followed by parents (18.9%), principals (8.8%), administrative assistants (8.3%), and community members (4.1%). Coded as other or missing were 3.3% of respondents. Numbers of respondents from each school ranged from two to 12.

School-Based Communities

Research Question #1: What progress has been made in schools as they move into the early stages of implementation of autonomy? In what specific areas?

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of response (discussed, in planning stages, in the process of being addressed or implemented, or not raised as reform issues) among 13 issues normally associated with educational reform: curriculum development, improving pedagogical practices, professional staff development (instructional staff), professional development of administrators, whole-school focus on teaching and learning, resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning, focus on assessment of student progress, dialogue among school teaching staff, dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal, collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff, collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff, participation of parents in school decision making, and participation of parents in school planning.

In order to assess fully the responses regarding implementation progress, respondents were first asked to indicate the level of priority that they believed should be assigned to each of the issues for education in general (national level) and for their school in particular.

General Priorities

Overall, priorities were rated relatively highly in terms of general schooling (x=3.92). Items rated highest overall were curriculum development (x=4.27), professional staff development/instructional staff (x=4.26), improving pedagogical practices (x=4.20), whole-school focus on teaching and learning (x=4.18), resources allocated primarily for teaching and learning (x=4.10), collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff (x=4.09). A cluster existed that included dialogue among school teaching staff (x=4.05), dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal (4.03), and collegial decision making among administrators and teaching staff (x=4.02).

Overall results for Sicily (x=4.14) were statistically significantly higher than those of Lazio (x=3.65) and Lombardy (x=3.83).

Across schools, the overall rating for one school in Palermo (#4) was statistically significantly higher than two schools in Tuscany (#s 8 and 11), five schools in Lombardy (#s 14-18), and three schools in Lazio (#s 19, 21, 23).

No differences in scale scores were uncovered among roles of stakeholders (administrator, administrative assistant, teachers, parents, and community members).

School Priorities

Respondents rated priority issues for their own schools relatively high (x=3.79), although at a rating slightly lower than general priorities. Issues rated highest overall were curriculum development (x=4.11), professional staff development/instructional staff (x=4.03), whole-school focus on teaching and learning (x=4.01), and improving pedagogical practices (x=3.99). A cluster occurred with four items dealing with dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal (x=3.95), collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff (x=3.95), dialogue among school teaching staff (x=3.94), and collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff (x=3.94).

There were no significant differences in ratings among regions. Ratings for School #4 in Palermo were statistically significantly lower than School 7 in Tuscany, and Schools 13 and 18 in Lombardy.

No differences in scale scores were uncovered among roles of stakeholders.

General Priorities vs. School Priorities

The scale total for General Priorities (x=3.92) was statistically significantly higher than that for School Priorities (x=3.79) (p=.014).

Actual Priorities

Data on the progress of schools were collected by asking respondents to indicate where in the process of reform respondents found themselves relative to the same issues presented in the General and School Priority areas. Respondents could indicate that each issue had not been raised at all, that the area had been discussed, was in the planning stage, or had been addressed or implemented.

Results indicated overall on a four-point scale that reforms were at the least at the point of planning or in the process of being carried forward (x=3.21). Items rated highest overall were professional staff development/instructional staff (x=3.64), dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal (x=3.42),

resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning (x=3.38), collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff (x=3.38), and collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff (x=3.37).

Overall results for Sicily (x=3.31) were significantly higher than those for Lazio (x=2.98).

The scale total for School 4 in Sicily and School 18 in Lombardy was significantly higher than that of school 1 in Sicily, School 9 in Tuscany, and School 16 in Lombardy. Scale total for School 4 in Sicily and School 18 in Lombardy was higher than that of School 1 in Sicily, School 9 in Tuscany, and Schools 14 and 16 in Tuscany. The score for School 14 in Lombardy was significantly lower than scores for Schools 3 and 4 in Sicily and School 18 in Lombardy. The score for School 3 in Sicily was greater than the score for School 14 in Lombardy.

No differences in scale scores were uncovered among roles of stakeholders.

When the 4-point scale was transformed to a 5-point scale and comparisons made with overall results of national (x=3.92) and school priorities (x=3.79) and priorities addressed (x=4.01), the mean for priorities addressed was statistically significantly higher than the mean for school priorities.

An alternative means of describing the findings of this question is through frequency distributions of item results (Table 1). Forty-eight percent (48%) of all respondents reported that reforms were already at the stage of implementation. If parental involvement in school planning is omitted, the percentage rises to over 50%.

Especially noteworthy are the individual items that are either in the planning stage or have been addressed or are in the process of being implemented. Totals are especially high for teacher training, resources allocated primarily for teaching/learning, collaborative planning among administrators and teaching staff, collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff, and dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal. If one discounts item #13 dealing with the participation of parents in school planning, this average is measurably higher (76.9%). If one omits the parental involvement item dealing with participation in school decision making, the average is 77.9%. Of all items in this section of the questionnaire, 73.8% of respondents reported that issues were at the stages of planning or implementation.

TABLE 1: Actual Priorities: Percentages by Phase of Process of Reform (N = 217)

Item/Issue	No Response	Not Confronted	Discussed	Planning	Addressed/ Implemented	Plan/ Add/ Imp
1. Curriculum development	5.1	3.2	19.4	30.4	41.9	72.3
2. Imrpoving pedagogical practices	4.1	5.1	18.0	22.1	50.7	72.8
3. Professsional staff development (instructional staff)	2.8	.9	6.0	20.7	69.6	90.3
4. Professional development of administrators	5.5	10.1	13.8	21.2	49.3	70.5
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning	5.5	4.1	14.7	30.4	45.2	75.6
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching/learning	4.1	.9	10.6	35.0	49.3	84.3
7. Focus on assessment of student progress	5.1	4.1	15.7	30.9	44.2	75.1
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff	2.8	5.1	21.7	17.1	53.5	70.6

9.	Dialogue between school teaching staff and Principal	3.7	4.1	11.5	20.3	60.4	80.7
10.	Collegial decision making a mong administrators/instructional staff	3.7	5.5	8.8	25.8	56.2	82.0
11.	Collaborative planning among administrators/ instructional staff	3.2	2.8	11.5	29.5	53.0	82.5
12.	Participation of parents in school decision making	2.3	4.6	26.7	30.0	36.4	66.4
13.	Participation of parents in school planning	3.2	28.1	32.3	21.7	14.7	36.4
	Column average:	3.9	6.1	16.2	25.8	48.0	73.8

Research Question #2: What have the government and different levels of the educational system – the Ministry, regions, provinces, local entities, and individual schools – done to prepare for, facilitate, and support the implementation of autonomy?

Respondents were asked to indicate by what means nine groups had been active in terms of the reforms. Respondents could indicate that the entities had been active in preparing their school for reform, had facilitated the reform, and/or had supported the actual implementation of reform. They could also indicate that each entity had not been involved at all. Respondents could indicate more than one means of involvement for each entity. Therefore, percentages could total more than 100%.

The Ministry was regarded as having an active role in preparing the school for reform (59.9%) and a somewhat active role in sustaining reforms (31.3%).

Regional officials were largely viewed as non-involved (42.4%), although 22% of respondents indicated that regional officials had assisted in preparing the school for reform and 20.3% indicated that these officials had facilitated reforms.

While over one third (36.4%) of respondents reported that provincial officials were not involved in assisting with reforms, they did report some involvement with preparing (19.4%), facilitating (22.3%), and sustaining (19.8%) reforms.

Local entities were viewed more as sustaining (31.8%) or lacking involvement (30.0%) than as preparing (18%) or facilitating (18%) reforms.

Teachers were perceived to be primarily involved in sustaining (55.3%) reforms, as opposed to preparing for (33.2%) or facilitating (34.6%) reforms.

While the primary role of the principal was perceived to be that of sustaining (60.8%) reforms, 43.3% of respondents indicated that principals were involved in preparing for reforms and 43% indicated principals were involved in facilitating the reform movement.

Other administrative personnel were viewed as relatively equally sustaining (38.2%) and facilitating (37.8%) reforms, with slightly over one quarter (26.7%) perceived as assisting in the preparation for reforms.

Parents were perceived to lack involvement (37.3%) or to have involvement at the level of sustaining (30.4%) reforms.

Members of the community were largely perceived to lack involvement (47.0%). At a minimal level, they were viewed as facilitating (15.7%) and sustaining (19.8%) reforms.

The primary role, therefore, for the Ministry was to prepare schools and for teachers to sustain reforms. Principals were viewed to be actively engaged in sustaining, preparing for, and facilitating reforms; other administrative personnel, for facilitating and

sustain reforms. The roles of local entities and parents were split between non-involvement and sustaining reforms.

Officials at regional and provincial levels were viewed as predominantly not involved with some level of involvement across the other three categories. Members of the community were viewed as having a low level to no involvement in assisting the reform movement.

Research Question #3: To what extent and in what ways have capacity factors identified in Phase I of the research served to facilitate the adoption and implementation of autonomy?

In the first phase of the research conducted in 1998, qualitative interviews conducted with policymakers uncovered 25 factors associated with the capacity of an organization to adopt and implement reforms. These factors were measured in the 2000 study on a five-point scale from 'never' to 'always.' Respondents answered items relative to their experience with their own schools.

Overall, no item was rated lower than 3.46, in the mid-range between 'sometimes' and 'often.' Eleven of 25 items were rated in the ranger of 4.01 to 4.53. Item #5, "Education is demonstrably the primary purpose of the school," was rated highest. Item #16, "The principal is committed to his/her own professional development," was rated second highest overall (x=4.42), and Item #4, "The school is student-focused," received the third highest rating overall (x=4.37). The following items also received ratings of 4.00 or more: Item #8, "The principal assumes the role of facilitator in the change process (x=4.21); Item #20, "Administrators encourage teacher involvement in developing new activities" (x=4.19); Item #21, "Administrators encourage teacher involvement in implementing new activities" (x=4.13); Item #23, "We learn from our mistakes in our school" (x=4.09); Item #22, "Administrators encourage teacher involvement in evaluating new activities" (x=4.06); Item #17, "Teachers, in general, are committed to professional development" (x=4.03); Item #14, "Teachers routinely use reflection to improve the curriculum or their lessons" (x=4.01); and Item #24, "We use our failures as opportunities to reevaluate practices and assumptions" (x=4.01).

Overall, the sample characterized their schools as possessing at relatively high levels factors associated with the capacity of a school to grow and change. No statistically significant differences were found among schools or regions for the total scale capacity score. Differences were noted in items by region: sharing a common vision for the school (Lombardy>Tuscany), the ability to deal with turbulence and controversy (Sicily>Tuscany), teacher commitment to improvement (Sicily>Lazio), time set aside for collaborative work among teachers to improve teaching (Lombardy>Tuscany), principal commitment to his/her own professional development (Lazio, Lombardy, Sicily>Tuscany), professional opportunities provided directly related to new initiatives (Lombardy>Lazio, Tuscany), encouragement for teacher involvement in evaluating new activities (Sicily>Tuscany), learning from mistakes (Sicily>Tuscany), using failures to reevaluate practices and assumptions (Sicily>Lombardy, Tuscany), and using failures to propose changes in curriculum or approaches to teaching (Sicily>Lombardy).

Total scale scores for Schools 4 and 5 in Sicily and Schools 13 and 18 in Lombardy were significantly higher than scores for Schools 11 in Tuscany and School 14 in Lombardy. Scores for Schools 13 and 18 in Lombardy were greater than scores for School 11 in

Tuscany and School 18 in Lombardy. The score for School 18 in Lombardy was higher than the score for School 16 in Lombardy.

No differences in scale scores were uncovered among roles of stakeholders.

Research Question #4: To what extent and in what ways have barriers identified in Phase I of the research impacted adoption and first-level implementation of autonomy?

As part of Phase I of the research, policy makers were asked to identify barriers to mandated reforms that included implementation of autonomy and school improvement. Thirty (30) barriers had been identified in the first phase of the research. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the 30 barriers was negatively impacting reform efforts in their school on a four-point scale. Lower scores indicated a lower perceived negative impact, and higher scores, greater negative impact. Respondents could also indicate that they "didn't know" the impact of the barrier.

Total scale score for the negative impact of obstacles was 2.86, close to the index for "somewhat" in the scale. Eight items had a mean of above 3.00. For the sample the greatest negative influences were perceived to be scarcity of resources (x=3.55), lack of clarity regarding the reforms (x=3.50), complexity/comprehensiveness of reforms (x=3.43), confusion over how to implement reforms (x=3.41), lack of incentives for teachers (x=3.32), lack of support from the Ministry (x=3.31), attempts to do too much at once (x=3.24), and lack of understanding regarding how to link autonomous management and instructional goals (x=3.03).

The least negative influences were perceived to be lack of skills/competencies in the principal (x=2.34), lack of preparedness for the principal (2.41), unconscious desire on the part of teachers to be directed (x=2.42), lack of motivation of the principal (x=2.49), fear of accountability (x=2.49), politics getting in the way (x=2.52), and fear on the part of teachers to take risks (x=2.59).

Overall, the scale score for Tuscany (x=3.05) was statistically significantly greater than that for Lombardy (x=2.77). The score for School 11 in Tuscany was significantly higher than the scores for School 4 in Sicily and School 18 in Lombardy. Significant differences were uncovered among regions in 12 of the 30 items in the scale: complexity/comprehensiveness of reforms (Lazio>Sicily), lack of resources (Lazio, Sicily, Tuscany>Lombardy), lack of principal preparation (Tuscany>Lazio), lack of motivation among teachers (Tuscany>Lazio), cross-purposes of professional educational organizations and trade unions (Tuscany>Sicily), lack of understanding regarding how to link autonomous management and instructional goals (Tuscany>Lombardy, Sicily), attempts to do too much at once (Lazio>Lombardy, Sicily; Tuscany>Lombardy, Sicily), lack of parental support (Tuscany>Lombardy), lack of community support (Sicily, Tuscany>Lazio, Sicily; Tuscany>Lombardy), politics getting in the way (Tuscany>Lazio), psychological anxiety regarding changing the way things are done (Lazio>Sicily), and tradition of centralization in Italian schools (Tuscany>Sicily).

Differences were found between two sets of schools, # 4 in Sicily (x=2.31) and #11 in Tuscany (x=3.29); # 11 in Tuscany (x=3.29) and # 18 in Lombardy (x=2.41).

No differences in scale scores were uncovered among roles of stakeholders.

Research Question #5: What new barriers have been identified based on attempts to adopt and implement autonomy?

No new barriers were uncovered. This may have been an artifact of the large numbers of barriers uncovered in the previous research and investigated in the present study. However, the quantitative research contributed to an understanding of the relative degree of each barrier identified in Phase I of the research and therefore the rank of impact of these barriers, at the level of the sample, region, and school. Also, qualitative responses tended to support the notion that the complexity and uncertainty of the reforms presented obstacles to practitioners as well as lack of support and resources and confusion over the means to put all reforms together.

The relative impact of these obstacles at the aggregate level and at the regional and school levels should assist practitioners in addressing or minimizing barriers to successful reform, school improvement, and the practice of autonomy.

Research Question #6: How congruent are views of autonomy between and among policy makers, legislators, practitioners (administrators/teachers) and social forces (parents/ community members)?

Views of Autonomy of School-Based Communities

Overall, the school sample largely agreed with statements that characterized the meanings of contents of autonomy. These responses indicated a relatively high level of understanding that the role of autonomy ideally plays in school and professional improvement.

Items were rated on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. So that higher means indicated more agreement, the numerical values of the scale were reversed for the processing of data. Items rated highest by the sample were autonomy creating more complex roles for the teachers (x=4.38) and the principal (x=4.34), fostering more creativity within the school (x=4.22), and allowing the individual school to be more responsive to its students (x=4.21).

Producing the scaled score presented a challenge. Three items queried respondents regarding their perceptions of responsibility for evaluating the final outcomes of schooling: the State (#13), the school (#14), or the State and school in combination (#15). The debate regarding this responsibility continues regarding the boundaries of assessment of final outcomes. Within this context, it seems reasonable to assume two points of view. This first is that schooling outcomes are a shared responsibility. The other is that self-determined school professionals, under the best of circumstances, would assume full responsibility for student results in their schools.

Because of the nature of this debate and having no unequivocal response to the debate, the total scale scores were calculated and reported in three ways: full scale with all 15 items (x=3.91), a scale score with Item 13 removed (x=3.99), and a scale score with Items 13-15 removed (x=4.03). Differences among these three measures were statistically significantly different at the .05 level.

Responses indicated that the sample did not strongly support State responsibility alone for evaluation of outcomes. Overall, support was slightly greater for a combined State and local responsibility. Regarding Items 14 and 15, the scale means for Lazio and Sicily were higher on the item of supporting individual school responsibility. Responses for Lombardy and Tuscany indicated greater support for a combined responsibility.

No significant differences were uncovered between and among regions or schools for the three total scale scores. No differences in scale scores were uncovered among roles of stakeholders.

See the section below on Policy Makers for a discussion of comparisons between school-based responses and those of the policy makers regarding autonomy and other variables investigated in this study.

Research Question #7: What new needs have emerged as the initiative begins moving from Phase I (legislation of autonomy) to Phase II (implementation)?

The most pressing reality of the reform movement in Italy is that the substance and direction of the reforms are shifting. The newly elected Presidente del Consiglio (Prime Minister) has determined to dismantle the reform of the "cycles" – or recent proposed restructuring of the elementary, middle, and high school structure into a two-part structure: elementary with lower and upper elements and high school.

Between 1997 and 2000, as reforms were in the phase of adoption, practitioners and policy makers alike regarded the movement as "too much too soon." For some, there was a feeling of resignation and fear, but most were willing to move forward in order to enhance Italy's position on the European stage and to improve schools from within. Most understood the necessity to shore up the infrastructure of reform, including more professional approaches to pre-service preparation of principals and teachers.

However, initial confusion over the reforms as proposed and frustration over perceived lack of resources and support have evolved into confusion about where reforms will go now and frustrations with a system that is directly impacted by the vagaries and instability of the Italian political system that is characterized by frequent changes in ruling party and, therefore, political orientation.

Presently, the credibility of the reform movement itself appears to be in peril. School practitioners view themselves as pawns of a State that has now taken a different direction due to a political election that saw the ascendancy of a center-right leader as center-left reforms were in the process of implementation. Italy's political system appears to destabilize rather than support institutional change and the forward movement of planned agendas.

ANCILLARY ANALYSES

Additional procedures were run to contribute to a richer understanding of the data. These procedures included correlation analysis of relationships among scales and means of ratings.

Correlation Analysis

The following relationships were uncovered:

General Priorities and School Priorities (r = .000), Autonomy (r = .009)
School Priorities and Capacity (r = .001), Autonomy (r = .002)
Actual Priorities and Capacity (r = .000), Obstacles (r =.000) *
Capacity and Obstacles (r = .000) *, Autonomy (.000)
• indicates a negative relationship

Findings suggest that autonomy, a principal interest of this research, is related to reform priorities at the national level, school reform priorities, and capacity for change. The greater the perceptions on the indices of school-site factors associated with autonomy, the higher respondents were likely to rate priorities associated with reform both for their nation and their individual school.

Capacity for positive change was associated with higher levels of priorities associated with reform. Those who indicated a higher level of capacity factors present in their schools tended to have higher ratings on indices of autonomy as well as perceive a lower impact of obstacles to reform attempts.

Obstacles were related both to capacity (negative value) and actual priorities, as addressed in individual schools. This indicated that the greater the level of obstacles perceived, the lower the perceived capacity for positive change. Those who rated progress of reform at lower levels (actual priorities) tended to rate obstacles at a higher level.

There was also a relationship between the level of rating of reform indices at the national level and the level of rating at the individual school level. The greater respondents felt that reform issues were a priority for the nation, the more they tended to rate higher the same issues for their schools.

RATINGS

Four open-ended questions were placed at the end of the questionnaire to give respondents an opportunity to give descriptive and explanatory answers relative to autonomy and school improvement. Responses were rated based on the richness of the response. Responses were rated on a scale of 0 to 4, with '0' representing no response, '1' representing one or two thoughts or sentences, '2' representing a somewhat developed response, '3' representing a more fully developed response, and '4' representing a well-developed and comprehensive response. Zero responses were deleted from calculation of means.

Following are the mean score and percentage of sample responding to each open-ended question:

Question	Mean	% Responding
Major challenges, barriers, issues to implementation of school reform/autonomy	2.35	82.5
Positive experiences with school reform/autonomy	1.96	60.8
Advantages of autonomy	1.73	76.0
Comments regarding implementation of autonomy/reforms in school of respondent	1.89	34.1

Policy Makers

The data for policy makers is not yet a complete data set, as some subjects have not yet returned questionnaires. However, a cross-section was available to make some general observations concerning perceptions of this group.

The group represented in the data results here include four professors, three of didactics (Catholic University (2) and University of Palermo) and one of the sociology of

education (University of Genoa); a principal of a school in Tuscany who also teaches courses at the University of Florence in the program for the preparation of elementary and preschool teachers as well as publishes books on the reform movement; a President of a trade union (Liguria); a national President of an association for school administrators (Rome); a school administrator and journalist who is widely published in the area of Italian reforms (Brescia); a Jesuit priest who is also a journalist/writer on educational and reform issues (Milan); a former school inspector, presently working as a consultant and an expert in school reform (Milan); an elementary school inspector from the Ministry of Education (Rome); and a school inspector (Brescia).

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS DERIVED FROM QUESTIONNAIRE

Priorities, Capacity, Obstacles, and Autonomy
Policy makers rated general priorities slightly lower (x=3.80) than did school-based respondents (x=3.92). They rated actual priorities in terms of their perceptions that reform issues were being addressed in Italian schools at a much lower level (x=2.75) than did the school-based sample (x=3.21).

Overall, the policy makers rated indices of capacity for change (characteristics of Italian schools in general) much lower (x=3.09) than did the school sample (x=3.92). However, policy makers rated obstacles to change higher (3.31) than did the school sample (x=2.86). They rated statements related to the characteristics of autonomy higher (x=4.35) than did the school respondents (x=4.03).

Of particular interest were the obstacle items with the greatest mean differences. Policy makers rated the following items as greater obstacles by more than one point difference: lack of skills/competencies in the principal (+1.24), lack of skills/competencies in the teachers (+1.13), psychological anxiety over losing control of one's work life (+1.06), fear of accountability (+1.06), lack of motivation among teachers (+1.03), and lack of motivation of the principal (+1.01). The only item that the school sample rated relatively higher than policy makers was balancing local and central needs (+.88).

There was relative agreement on the following obstacle items: lack of resources, lack of support from the Ministry, lack of understanding regarding how to link autonomous management and instructional goals, attempts to do too much at once, complexity/comprehensiveness of reforms, and lack of parental support.

Policy makers rated the following statements higher than did the school sample: autonomy requires a more complex role for the school principal (+.58), autonomy cannot succeed in the absence of strong principal leadership (+.57), autonomy means that decisions are made by people at the school level (+.51), and evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the State (+.48). School respondents rated only two items somewhat higher than did policy makers: the evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the individual school (+.53) and one of the aims of autonomy is to put theory and practice together (+.51).

Regarding entities, the policy makers regarded the Ministry as preparing (50%), sustaining (41.7%), and facilitating the reforms (33.3%). Regional entities were viewed as facilitating (33.3%) and somewhat sustaining efforts (25%). Provincial officials were seen as sustaining (41.7%) and somewhat facilitating efforts (25%). However, for both regional and

provincial entities, 25% of policy makers viewed the entities as not being involved in supporting reforms.

Teachers were regarded as facilitating (33.3%) and sustaining (33.3%) efforts and somewhat preparing (25%) for reforms. The principal was viewed as sustaining (50%) and facilitating (41.7%) reforms and somewhat preparing for reforms (25%). Other administrators were largely viewed as not being involved (33.3%) and somewhat preparing for (25%) and facilitating (25%) reforms. Parents were viewed as predominantly not being involved (50%). Community members were seen as not being involved (41.7%) and somewhat assisting in the preparation for reforms (25%).

Ratings of Open-ended Questions

Four open-ended questions were also given to policy maker respondents. They were asked to rate questions in terms of their general experience with Italian schools. Responses were rated as in the case of school-based communities, from "0" to "4."

Following are the mean score and percentage of sample responding to each open-ended questions:

Question	Mean	% Responding
Major challenges, barriers, issues to implementation of school reform/autonomy	3.00	91.7
Positive experiences with school reform/autonomy	2.33	75.0
Advantages of autonomy	2.20	83.3
Comments regarding implementation of autonomy/reforms in school of respondent	3.29	58.3

As a group, the policy makers were more inclined to respond to the open-ended questions (percentage results); they also, as indicated by the mean scores for each item, offered richer and more complete responses than did the school-based community group.

No ancillary analyses (correlations, subgroup analyses) of policy makers' data were conducted due to the small sample size.

DISCUSSION

The Present Study

While respondents viewed priorities for the nation only slightly higher than those for their schools, this difference was statistically significant (p=.014). The same priorities assessed as improvement issues that should be addressed at the national level and at the level of the school of the respondent were generally assessed as having been carried forward beyond the planning stage. Only participation of parents in school planning was rated overall in the planning range. When actual items were transformed to a 5-point scale, results indicated that items were actually being addressed at a higher level than they had been rated as priorities. While the same scales were not used for both variables, the scales were roughly equivalent in terms of their quantitative ordinal nature.

When respondents rated capacity items, overall they perceived that the capacity factors "usually" characterized their schools. Obstacles to reform were rated in the "little"

to "somewhat" range. When asked to agree or disagree with statements related to factors associated with autonomous practices, respondents indicated overall that they agreed with the statements, indicating a relatively high level of understanding regarding the components and practices of autonomy.

Data derived from open-ended responses enriched and extended the questionnaire results. Qualitative responses suggest a level of concern, confusion, and frustration not uncovered by the quantitative data, especially with regard to the obstacles to change, uncertainty regarding how to mesh reform efforts, and how to proceed in terms of implementing reforms.

These findings suggest that there is a foundational basis upon which to build capacity for change, reform, and improvement; they also suggest that interventions are needed to assist teachers especially in planning for reforms and integrating reform strategies into the existing school organization.

Some differences were uncovered between and among regions as well as between and among schools. This underscores the need to address school change and improvement in terms of differentiated rather than aggregate needs and concerns.

Entities were viewed variously in their contribution to support and facilitation of reform efforts. School-based communities must become more aware of the role each entity has been assigned to play in the reform movement, what facilitation each entity can provide, and how to access services that these entities are expected to deliver. While this research did not collect information on the perceptions of respondents regarding the role professional associations can play in supporting reform efforts, qualitative data suggested that respondents were not aware of the technical training opportunities and technical materials and guides available through their many professional associations.

The nature of relationships uncovered has important implications for the autonomy movement in Italy. For example, respondents who rated general and school priorities higher – issues they felt should be addressed in their reform movement – had more accurate views regarding the tenets of autonomy. Those who rated their schools as having higher capacity for change held more accurate views of autonomy as well as perceived obstacles to change as being less present in their schools.

Comparisons of results of the school-based communities and policy makers suggest a lack of congruence that requires attention, especially in three areas. First, school communities perceived that they had advanced farther in implementing aspects of reform than did the policy makers. Secondly, school communities perceived that there is a higher level of capacity factors present in their schools than did policy makers. Third, policy makers rated obstacles to change that negatively impact reform efforts at higher levels than did school-based communities. It is important to remember, however, the school-based respondents were rating their own schools whereas policy makers were rating their perceptions of Italian schools in the aggregate.

These findings suggest the importance of communication, interaction, and dialogue between practitioners and policy makers regarding actual practice in schools, capacity factors, and obstacles.

Broader Implications

While policies decentralizing the governance of educational systems are appealing in the abstract, they often tend to be fundamentally ambivalent and in conflict with powerful

forces that favor centralization (Weiler, 1990). School-based practitioners, especially teachers, are confronted by the many tensions that surround the issue of decentralization. While the work of orchestrating reform is often left to the principal, the response and collaboration of teachers is almost equally critical to the success of the introduction of change into school settings.

Proponents of decentralization or school autonomy argue that autonomous decision making at the school level will have a significant effect on teaching and learning, and, consequently, outcomes. A major issue surrounds the type of autonomous decision making that is promoted; some forms of autonomy merely decentralize some of the managerial aspects of administration rather than decentralizing critical decision making related to teaching and learning (Davies & Hentschke, 1994).

Debates still wage over the factors that foster school improvement. Some feel that national and state standard setting and systemic reform foster more improvement and educational equity than the single-school approach (Porter, 1994). Such proponents of this position argue that schools can be held accountable for student achievement based on exemplary national achievement standards and that technical assistance should be provided if necessary (Porter, 1994).

One of the main catalysts for Italy's commitments to democratize its schools is the pursuit of autonomy by many of its European neighbors. During the 1990s, Germany, the Netherlands, and France, among others, have been seeking more autonomous practices in school decision making. As in the case of Italy, these discussion focus on the political and market enterprise benefits of school democratization (Winter, 2000).

However, movement toward autonomy in Europe has also raised a multitude of issues. In Germany, writers have raised the problem of how concepts of market and competition in pedagogical contexts differ from those in economic contexts (Fischer & Rolff, 1997). Also in Germany, some have argued that even within the framework of greater independence that autonomy permits, tasks still must defined and accounted for politically and legally (Lange, 1995) and that while autonomy involves debureaucratization, it does not require the withdrawal of the State (Fischer & Rolff, 1997).

On the other hand, as Sweden has discovered, new patterns of control evolve under conditions of decentralization, with teachers coming under the control of local politicians (Lander, 1991). The question of "control" has not been resolved in terms of the shift of power in decentralized paradigms.

This, in turn, raises the issue of the level at which accountability ultimately rests. One of the possible obvious consequences of school autonomy is increased responsibility for results at local levels (Lange, 1995). The question, then, is, if accountability is to rest both at State and local levels, who is accountable for what outcome?

Another issue that arises is who is to deliver support and services formerly provided by State agencies. In the case of Italy, regional and provincial (or territorial) agencies have been created or further developed to respond to needs. In the Netherlands, an intermediary administrative tier has been created between the State and local schools. Such developments can have dual deleterious effects: intermediary tiers can undermine school autonomy while simultaneously weakening the central government's sense of responsibility (Karsten, 1998).

Comparisons of results of school-based communities and policy makers suggest that there are important differences in perceptions between the two groups. It is important

for policy makers to know that school-based communities hold more positive views of capacity factors. School-based communities, when compared with policy makers, perceive obstacles to be of a lesser impact on reform efforts. It must be remembered that the assessment by policy makers is one of Italian schools on the whole, whereas school-based communities rated their own schools. Nevertheless, this discrepancy has implications inasmuch as policy makers are guiding the reforms while it is largely the schools that are implementing the reforms.

Reform, Professional Community, and Organizational Learning

At the forefront of conversations of reform is assessing the potential of individual schools to create professional communities and to develop as organizations through learning processes. While no strong relationships have been uncovered between capacity for organizational learning and school restructuring themes, more recent investigations have uncovered a link between teacher empowerment and capacity for organizational learning. More successful schools appear to have decision-making structures in place that facilitate teacher influence over school matters (Marks & Louis, 1999).

Additionally, there is some evidence of a relationship between professional community and higher levels of climate conducive to organizational learning. Schools that have a more developed professional community also have environments that are more supportive of innovation and experimentation. This suggests that when internal professional structures and faculty norms are in place, a climate often develops in which the faulty is encourage to seek out and perhaps even attempt new ways of teaching. It is possible that if professional community in fact fosters instructional change, it may do so by creating an environment that supports teacher learning through innovation and experimentation (Byrk et al., 1999).

Professional community is strongly associated with high-quality teaching, students' sense of community and inclusion in the school setting (Louis & Marks, 1998), shared norms and values, a focus on student learning, use of reflective dialogue, deprivatization of practice, and collaboration (Louis et al., 1996). Teacher empowerment is important as part of a cluster of school development characteristics that, when focused on the quality of student learning, have demonstrated results at the classroom level. A school-wide teacher professional community affects the level of classroom authentic pedagogy and the level of social support for student learning, which in turn affect student performance (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Learning communities flourish and support school improvement when comprised of four critical variables: principal leadership, organizational history, organizational priorities, and organization of teachers' work (Scribner et al., 1999). Finally, it appears that schools' abilities to perform at high levels, defined as teachers' practicing quality pedagogy and students' performing well on authentic and standardized measures, are likely to depend on their capacity for organizational learning (Marks, Louis, & Guerrera, in press).

Results of school-based communities from this study suggest that critical capacity factors are present that support reform efforts, especially the factors of focus on education as the primary purpose of the school and student focus of the school. The obstacles to reform noted in this study by school-based communities are those that are normally the result of the failure of outside agencies – both political and educational – to prepare practitioners for change: scarcity of resources, lack of clarity regarding the reforms, complexity/comprehensiveness of reforms, confusion over how to implement reforms, lack

of incentives for teachers, lack of support from the Ministry, attempts to do too much at once, and lack of understanding regarding how to link autonomous management and instructional goals. Obstacles rated at the lowest end – not perceived to be of great impact - were those that might otherwise impede progress internally: lack of skills/competencies in the principal, lack of preparedness for the principal, unconscious desire on the part of teachers to be directed, lack of motivation of the principal, fear of accountability, politics getting in the way, and fear on the part of teachers to take risks.

This suggests that school-based communities are relatively well positioned internally regarding attitudes toward and capacity for change. Results also suggest that external support must be organized, developed, and shared with practitioners.

Results suggest, as well, that perceptions of policy makers are not congruent with those of school-based communities regarding critical features of reform – especially implementation of improvement factors and perceptions of capacity and obstacles. While school-based communities have enlightened views of autonomy, ratings of policy makers were even higher. It is important for policy makers, armed with their enlightened attitudes toward autonomy, to understand what practitioners perceive and are facing in terms of implementing reforms.

Reform and the Principal

The critical nature of principal leadership relative to school improvement is well established in the literature. Data from this study suggest that principals are responding in ways that support successful school reform, especially in the areas of assuming the role of facilitator in the change process, commitment to their own professional development, and encouraging teachers to develop and implement new activities. Supporting these data are the perceptions of school-based communities that preparation of principals, lack of principal motivation, and lack of skills and competencies of the principal are not meaningfully negatively impacting reform efforts in the schools of respondents. Additionally, across all variables in this study, perceptions of instructional staff are congruent with those of administrators.

Role Differentiation

This study suggests that when it comes to perceptions held regarding components that contribute to or detract from reform efforts, the various stakeholder groups in the school-based community group held congruent views. Role differentiation did occur in comparisons of perceptions held by school-based communities and policy makers.

Research on school autonomy has demonstrated that when it comes to participation in different aspects of school reform, there is differentiation among principals, teachers, and parents regarding their perceptions of participation (Ferrara, 1993, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b, 1998, 1999). This study did not investigate actual practices of participation or desire to participate.

The congruence of perceptions among school-based groups suggests a foundation exists for collaboration in implementing reforms. The lack of congruence between school-based communities and policy makers, on the other hand, suggests a need for communication and understanding between these two groups.

The Italian Context

Issues of politics, economics, and accountability are inextricably bound up in the Italian autonomy and reform movement, at least at the level of policy and legislation. Reforms went forward without shoring up the infrastructure in preparation for the predictable upheaval that would occur. The instability of Italian politics suggests that the future of specific aspects of the reform movement may be uncertain.

On the other hand, school-based respondents did not view "politics getting in the way" as an impediment to reform efforts. It appears that not only are Italian teachers receptive to experimenting with innovative practices that they assess to have benefit for their students but that they view their principals as encouraging their involvement in the development, implementation, and assessment of innovative practices.

An implication worth pursuing is the discrepancy between the perceptions of school-based communities and policy makers and their political and educational impact.

Using Results for School Improvement

As part of the agreement between the researcher and the participants, schools were informed that school-level data could be used for individual school analysis, planning, and development. In the case of Sicily, data were shared in April of 2001 with participants and discussions were held regarding how to use results to build capacity for change, to create professional development and school improvement plans, and to monitor initiatives. The focus of the reporting of the research results in a national (Italian) journal will not only be at the level of aggregate results of the research but also on the practical use and application of data to formulate, implement, and monitor plans for building school capacity, improving teaching and learning, and assessing efforts of initiatives. Future plans include offers to return to the other three regions (Lombardy, Tuscany, and Lazio) to share the results with respondents and to assist in interpreting data for the purpose of school reform.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Several issues were not targeted for investigation in this study: whether teachers perceive they have more opportunities for influence; how teachers are responding to opportunities for influence; how these opportunities might be affecting their teaching; how such opportunities affect their professional lives and their sense of self-efficacy; how empowerment affects student academic performance; how professional learning communities contribute to school development and student learning – all issues that have been addressed over the last 10 years in American studies (Louis et al., 1996; Marks & Lewis, 1997; Scribner et al., 1999; White, 1992). Studies in the U.S. have demonstrated that while empowerment is an important factor, empowerment by itself is not a sufficient condition of change to impact teaching quality and student performance (Marks & Louis, 1997).

An important future line of inquiry focuses on reasons for the lack of congruence between perceptions of school-based communities and policy makers across critical factors of school reform.

Open-ended responses of this study begin to provide an initial window on thoughts of administrators and teachers. They feel in theory that they will have more local control and that as a result there is potential for self-actualization as professionals. However, since reforms have only just begun, reflections on the response to these opportunities are lacking

as well as on the effect of reform opportunities on improved teaching, professionalism, and self-efficacy. These perceptions will also be influenced by the future of the reforms, now at a critical crossroads.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

School-based participants in the investigation of the implementation of school reforms and autonomy in Italy indicate a relatively high level of understanding regarding the contents and practice of autonomy.   They report also, at a relatively high level, the utilization of practices normally associated with building capacity for improvement and implementing reform. They report in the "somewhat" range the presence of obstacles to reform. They also perceive that many reform agenda items have either been planned or are in the process of being carried forward in their own schools. Policy makers, on the other hand, rated the presence of reform elements in schools at a lower level. At the same time, they rated obstacles to reform at higher rates and capacity for reform at lower rates.

Data derived from open-ended responses enrich the questionnaire results; they also suggest, however, a level of confusion and frustration on the part of school communities not uncovered by the quantitative data.   Data also illuminate the positive disposition policy makers and school personnel have regarding the promises and possibilities of autonomy. However, policy makers perceive challenges to be greater and capacities to be less than do the school-based communities.

Concerns that apply to the Italian situation presently are concerns also raised in other European – as well as American – professional literature. Intensification of state policymaking, even in the face of decentralization, can have the reverse effect of constraining local autonomy (Malen & Muncey, 1999).   In addition, while a wealth of cutting-edge information is available to practitioners today in Italy, the Italian experience is not unlike the experience of other nations relative to whole-scale reform wherein materials and professional development opportunities fail to reach a critical mass of school-based educators.

The Italians, however, face more than the usual uncertainty regarding the forward motion of their autonomy and reform movement. Silvio Berlusconi, recently elected Prime Minister, is dismantling reforms, including the restructuring of the levels of schooling. It would be in the best interest of the society if powerful policy makers reflected on the perceptions of the school-based communities in order to understand their perspective, to support and facilitate reform efforts, and to respond to needs identified by school-based communities who, ultimately, must not only implement and sustain reform efforts but must also deliver the products of schooling. It is not in the interest of a society that decisions regarding the contents and structure of reforms rest solely in the hands of policy makers who appear to be more persuaded by political orientations than the need to address and improve social conditions or educational outcomes.

This study has raised as many questions as it attempted to answer.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONAIRE

General Directions: There are two types of questions in this questionnaire. For the bubble format questions, please fill in the bubble completely but do not make marks outside the bubble, as the data will be analyzed using a scanner. It is important that you provide a response for every item.

For the open comments questions (#6, #7, #9), I invite you to write as much as you would like.

Please read the directions for each section below very carefully. Thank you.

1) A. The items below are considered important to reform and improvement efforts. Please indicate what level of priority you believe should be assigned to each of the following in the context of reform/school improvement. First indicate what you believe should be the level of priority for education in general and then for your school in particular.

		IN GENERAL					IN YOUR SCHOOL			
	LOW	LOW MED	MED	MED HIGH	HIGH	LOW	LOW MED	MED	MED HIGH	HIGH
1. Curriculum development......	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
2. Improving pedagogical practices	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)...	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
4. Professional development of administrators...	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning...	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning...	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
7. Focus on assessment of student progress...	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

8. Dialogue among school teaching
staff　　　　　　　　　　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　o　　o　　o o

9. Dialogue between school teaching
staff and the principal... ... ... o　　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　o　　o　　o o

10. Collegial decision making among
administrators and instructional staff o　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　o　o　　o　　o

11. Collaborative planning among
administrators and instructional staff o　　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　o　o　　o　o

12. Participation of parents in school
decision making... ... ...o　　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　o　o　　o o

13. Participation of parents in school
planning... ... ...　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　　o　o　o　　o o

B. **Please indicate whether each of the following areas of possible focus for reform efforts/school improvement have been merely** <u>discussed,</u> **are presently in the** <u>planning</u> **stages, are in the process of being** <u>addressed/implemented</u> **in your school as part of the reform movement, or** <u>have not been raised</u> **as issues at all:**

	D I S C U S S E D	P L A N N E D	I M P L E M E N T E N E N	N O T R A I S E D E T E D
1. Curriculum development...	o	o	o	o
2. Improving pedagogical practices...	o	o	o	o
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)	o	o	o	o
4. Professional development of administrators...	o	o	o	o
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning...	o	o	o	o
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning...	o	o	o	o
7. Focus on assessment of student progress...	o	o	o	o
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff...	o	o	o	o
9. Dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal...	o	o	o	o

10. Collegial decision making among administrators
    And instructional staff   o   o   o   o
11. Collaborative planning among administrators and
    instructional staff... ... ...   o   o   o   o
12. Participation of parents in school decision
    making... ... ...   o   o   o   o
13. Participation of parents in school
    planning... ... ... o   o   o   o

2) For the following entities, please indicate whether each has been active
   in preparing your school for reform, facilitating the reform, and/or
   supporting the actual implementation of reforms. You may bubble more
   than one answer for each entity. If the entity has not been involved at
   all, you may indicate this by bubbling not involved.

	P R E P A R I N G	F A C I L I T A T I N G	S U S T A I N I N G	N O T I N V O L V E D
1. the Ministry...	o	o	o	o
2. regional bodies...	o	o	o	o
3. provincial bodiess...	o	o	o	o
4. local entities...	o	o	o	o
5. teachers...	o	o	o	o
6. the principal...	o	o	o	o
7. administrators other than the principal...	o	o	o	o
8. parents...	o	o	o	o
9. community members...	o	o	o	o

3) The following factors are often associated with the capacity of an organization to grow and change in positive directions. Please indicate on the scale below from never to always the extent to which each of the following statements is true in the sense that the statement characterizes your school.

	NEVER	ALMOST NEVER	A LITTLE NEVER	SOMEWHAT	ALWAYS
			A LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	ALWAYS THAT
1) The principal, teachers, and parents share a common vision for the school...	o	o	o	o	o
2) The community has esteem for and values the school...	o	o	o	o	o
3) The school has the ability to deal with turbulence and controversy...	o	o	o	o	o
4) The school is student focused...	o	o	o	o	o
5) Education is demonstrably the primary purpose of the school...	o	o	o	o	o
6) Different responsibilities are given to different people in order to maximize each individual's contribution...	o	o	o	o	o
7. Educators within the school are not afraid to document student progress, even when the progress does not reach expectations	o	o	o	o	o
8. The principal assumes the role of facilitator in the change process...	o	o	o	o	o
9. The principal shares authority with the teachers... ...	o	o	o	o	o
10. The principal encourages teachers to assume leadership roles...	o	o	o	o	o
11. Some teachers in the school have been assigned leadership roles...	o	o	o	o	o
12. Some teachers have assumed leadership roles...	o	o	o	o	o
13. In general, the teachers are committed to improvement	o	o	o	o	o
14. Teachers routinely use reflection to improve the curriculum or their lessons...	o	o	o	o	o

15. Time is set aside for collaborative work among
    teachers to improve teaching... ...   o   o   o   o   o
16. The principal is committed to his/her own professional
    development... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
17. Teachers, in general, are committed to professional
    development... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
18. Instructional staff are provided opportunities for
    professional development <u>directly</u> related to new
    initiatives in the school... ... ... o   o   o   o   o
19. The exchange of ideas is encouraged... ... ...   o   o   o   o o
20. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in
    <u>developing</u> new activities... ... .   o   o   o   o   o
21. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in
    <u>implementing</u> new activities... .   o   o   o   o   o
22. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in
    <u>evaluating</u> new activities... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
23. We learn from our mistakes in our school... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
24. We use our failures as opportunities to
    reevaluate practices and assumptions... ...   o   o   o   o   o
25. We use our failures to propose changes in
    curriculum or approaches to teaching...   o   o   o   o   o

4)   **The following items represent different obstacles to reform. Please
     indicate the extent to which you believe each the following factors is
     <u>negatively</u> impacting reform efforts in your school.**

		NOT AT ALL	LITTLE	SOMEWHAT	A LOT	DO NOT KNOW
1.	Balancing local and central needs...	o	o	o	o	o
2.	Complexity/comprehensiveness of reforms...	o	o	o	o	o
3.	Lack of clarity regarding the reforms...	o	o	o	o	o
4.	Confusion over how to implement reforms...	o	o	o	o	o
5.	Lack of resources...	o	o	o	o	o
6.	The additional work/time associated with improvement and change...	o	o	o	o	o
7.	Lack of preparedness for teachers...	o	o	o	o	o
8.	Lack of preparedness for the principal...	o	o	o	o	o
9.	Lack of motivation among teachers...	o	o	o	o	o

10. Lack of motivation of the principal... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
11. Lack of incentives for teachers... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
12. Lack of incentives for the principal... ... ... o   o   o   o   o
13. Lack of skills/competencies in the teachers... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
14. Lack of skills/competencies in the principal... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
15. Reluctance of people to assume additional professional
    responsibilities... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
16. Professional educational organizations and trade
    unions working at cross-purposes... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
17. Lack of support from the Ministry... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
18. Lack of understanding regarding how to link autonomous
    management and instructional goals... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
19. Attempts to do too much at once... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
20. Lack of parental support... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
21. Lack of community support... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
22. Politics getting in the way... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
23. Psychological anxiety regarding changing the way things
    are done... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
24. Psychological anxiety over losing control of one's work life o   o   o   o   o
25. Lack of time for teachers to interact collaboratively for
    Educational planning/development... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
26. Fear of accountability... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
27. The tradition of centralization in Italian schools... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
28. An unconscious desire on the part of teachers to be
    drected... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
29. An unwillingness on the part of teachers to change
    their practices... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o
30. A fear on the part of teachers to take risks... ... ...   o   o   o   o   o

5)   **Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements on autonomy:**

	AGREE STRONGLY	AGREE	NEUTRAL NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	DISAGREE STRONGLY
1. Autonomy means that decisions are made by people at the school level...	o	o	o	o	o
2. Autonomy fosters more creativity within the school...	o	o	o	o	o
3. One of the aims of autonomy is to put theory and practice together...	o	o	o	o	o
4. Autonomy encourages building local capacity...	o	o	o	o	o
5. If local capacity is not developed, autonomy cannot succeed...	o	o	o	o	o
6. Autonomy provides opportunities for schools to be more responsive to local differences...	o	o	o	o	o
7. Autonomy allows the individual school to be more responsive to its students... ...	o	o	o	o	o
8. Autonomy is necessary for the realization of school improvement...	o	o	o	o	o
9. Autonomy requires a more complex role for the school principal...	o	o	o	o	o
10. Autonomy requires more complex roles for the teachers	o	o	o	o	o
11. Autonomy means that teachers assume responsibility for the curriculum...	o	o	o	o	o
12. Autonomy cannot succeed in the absence of strong principal leadership...	o	o	o	o	o
13. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the State...	o	o	o	o	o
14. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the individual school...	o	o	o	o	o
15. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is a shared responsibility of the school and the State...	o	o	o	o	o

6)   Please indicate what you think are the major challenges, barriers, and issues that school practitioners face as they begin to implement the different aspects of school reform and school autonomy. Please feel free to write as much as you like. (You may attach an extra page if this is space is not sufficient. Please put the corresponding number on the additional paper.)

7)   A. Can you describe any positive experiences that you have had with school reform and the autonomy movement? (You may attach an extra page if this space is not sufficient. Please put the corresponding number on the additional paper.)

   B.   Can you share any feelings concerning the advantages of autonomy? (You may attach an extra page if this space is not sufficient. Please put the corresponding number on the additional paper.)

8)   Please respond to these last questions.

   1.   Your region:
        Lazio   o
        Lombardia   o
        Sicilia   o
        Toscana   o

   2.   The name of your school (write the name): _____

   3.   What is your role in relation to the school?
        Principal   o
        Administrative assistant   o
        Teacher   o
        Parent   o
        Community member   o

        Other (specify): _____

   If you are a principal, how many years have you served in this position at your school?_____

   If you are a teacher, how many years have you served in this position at your school?_____

   If you are a parent, how many years have you had a child in this school?_____

9)   Finally, please feel free to make any comments regarding the implementation of
      autonomy and reforms in your school that you would like to share with me.
      (You may attach an extra page if this space is not sufficient. Please put the
      corresponding number on the additional paper. Make certain that all of your
      attachments are attached to your own questionnaire and not to the
      questionnaire of any other participant. Thank you.)
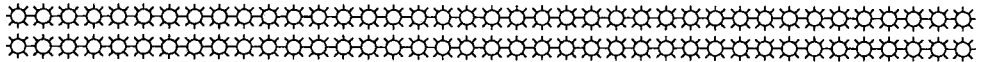
✡✡✡
✡✡✡
Please answer all questions. It is very important to the results of the research.

Thank you for your participation..

A summary of the results will be sent to your school.

APPENDIX B: Perceptions of School-Based Education Communities and Policy Makers Regarding Adoption and Implementation of Reforms
in Italian Schools: Italian Schools and Policy Makers

Section/Item	School Sample Total n=217	Policy Makers n=12
GENERAL PRIORITIES		
1. Curriculum development	4.27	4.17
2. Improving pedagogical practices	4.20	4.25
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)	4.26	4.58
4. Professional development of administrators	3.96	3.42
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning	4.18	3.83
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning	4.10	4.08
7. Focus on assessment of student progress	3.90	3.75
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff	4.05	3.83
9. Dialogue between school teaching staff and the Principal	4.03	3.83
10. Collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff	4.02	3.92
11. Collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff	4.09	3.83
12. Participation of parents in school decision making	3.23	3.33
13. Participation of parents in school planning	2.63	2.58
Total: General Priorities (Scale: 1 = low, 5 = high)	3.92	3.80
SCHOOL PRIORITIES		
1. Curriculum development	4.11	NA
2. Improving pedagogical practices	3.99	NA
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)	4.03	NA
4. Professional development of administrators	3.78	NA
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning	4.01	NA
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning	3.97	NA
7. Focus on assessment of student progress	3.87	NA
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff	3.94	NA
9. Dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal	3.95	NA
10. Collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff	3.94	NA

11. Collaborative planning among administrators
    and instructional staff   3.95   NA
12. Participation of parents in school decision making   3.19   NA
13. Participation of parents in school planning   2.60   NA

    Total: School Priorities   3.79   NA
    (Scale: 1 = low, 5 = high)

ACTUAL PRIORITIES
1. Curriculum development   3.17   3.00
2. Improving pedagogical practices   3.24   2.70
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)   3.64   3.09

Section/Item	School Sample Total n=217	Policy Makers n=12
4. Professional development of administrators	3.16	2.55
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning	3.23	3.00
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning	3.38	2.55
7. Focus on assessment of student progress	3.21	2.91
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff	3.22	2.91
9. Dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal	3.42	2.82
11. Collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff	3.38	2.82
12. Collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff	3.37	2.73
12. Participation of parents in school decision making	3.00	2.45
13. Participation of parents in school planning	2.24	2.18

    Total: Actual Priorities   3.21   2.75
    (Scale: 1 = not addressed, 2 = discussed, 3 = planned, 4 = implemented)

CAPACITY FACTORS
1. The principal, teachers, and parents share a common
   vision for the school.   3.66   2.58
2. The community has esteem for and values the school.   3.68   2.92
3. The school has the ability to deal with turbulence and
   controversy.   3.85   3.17
4. The school is student focused.   4.37   3.25
5. Education is demonstrably the primary purpose of the
   school.   4.53   3.50
6. Different responsibilities are given to different people in
   order to maximize each individual's contribution.   3.87   2.67

Section/Item	School Sample Total n=217	Policy Makers n=12
7 Educators within the school are not afraid to document student progress, even when the progress does not reach expectations.	3.78	3.67
7. The principal assumes the role of facilitator in the change process.	4.21	3.67
9. The principal shares authority with the teachers.	3.85	2.42
10. The principal encourages teachers to assume leadership roles.	3.73	2.58
11. Some teachers in the school have been assigned leadership roles.	3.62	2.83
12. Some teachers have assumed leadership roles.	3.46	3.00
13. In general, the teachers are committed to improvement.	3.56	2.83
14. Teachers routinely use reflection to improve the curriculum or their lessons.	4.01	3.67
15. Time is set aside for collaborative work among teachers to improve teaching.	3.56	3.00
16. The principal is committed to his/her own professional development.	4.42	3.83
17. Teachers, in general, are committed to professional development.	4.03	3.58
18. Instructional staff are provided opportunities for professional development directly related to new initiatives in the school.	3.69	3.75
19. The exchange of ideas is encouraged.	3.90	3.50
20. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in developing new activities.	4.19	3.50
21. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in implementing new activities.	4.13	3.27
22. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in evaluating new activities.	4.06	2.92
23. We learn from our mistakes in our school.	4.09	2.50
24. We use our failures as opportunities to reevaluate practices and assumptions.	4.01	2.33
25. We use our failures to propose changes in curriculum or approaches to teaching.	3.86	2.25
Total: Capacity (Scale: 1 = low/never, 5 = high/always)	3.92	3.09

Section/Item	School Sample Total n=217	Policy Makers n=12

OBSTACLES TO CHANGE

1. Balancing local and central needs	2.88	2.00
2. Complexity/comprehensiveness of reforms	3.43	3.36
3. Lack of clarity regarding the reforms	3.50	3.64
4. Confusion over how to implement reforms	3.41	3.82
5. Lack of resources	3.55	3.50
6. The additional work/time associated with improvement and change	2.79	3.25
7. Lack of preparedness for teachers	2.80	3.45
8. Lack of preparedness for the principal	2.41	3.17
9. Lack of motivation among teachers	2.89	3.92
10. Lack of motivation of the principal	2.49	3.50
11. Lack of incentives for teachers	3.32	3.64
12. Lack of incentives for the principal	2.76	3.17
13. Lack of skills/competencies in the teachers	2.60	3.73
14. Lack of skills/competencies in the principal	2.34	3.58
15. Reluctance of people to assume additional professional responsibilities	2.85	3.25
16. Professional educational organizations and trade unions working at cross-purposes.	2.70	3.11
17. Lack of support from the Ministry	3.31	3.25
18. Lack of understanding regarding how to link autonomous management and instructional goals	3.03	3.09
19. Attempts to do too much at once	3.24	3.18
20. Lack of parental support	2.76	2.67
21. Lack of community support	2.72	2.42
22. Politics getting in the way	2.52	2.82
23. Psychological anxiety regarding changing the way things are done	2.82	3.67
24. Psychological anxiety over losing control of one's work life	2.61	3.67
25. Lack of time for teachers to interact collaboratively for educational planning/development	2.96	3.42
26. Fear of accountability	2.49	3.55
27. The tradition of centralization in Italian schools	2.84	3.50
28. An unconscious desire on the part of teachers to be Directed.	2.42	3.08
29. An unwillingness on the part of teachers to change their practices	2.82	3.50
30. A fear on the part of teachers to take risks	2.59	3.33
Total: Obstacles to Change	**2.86**	**3.31**

(Scale: 1 = low negative influence, 4 = high negative influence)

Section/Item	School Sample Total n=217	Policy Makers n=12
STATEMENTS OF AUTONOMY		
1. Autonomy means that decisions are made by people at the school level.	4.07	4.58
2. Autonomy fosters more creativity within the school.	4.22	4.42
3. One of the aims of autonomy is to put theory and practice together.	3.68	3.17
4. Autonomy encourages building local capacity.	3.98	4.17
5. If local capacity is not developed, autonomy cannot succeed.	3.70	4.17
6. Autonomy provides opportunities for schools to be more responsive to local differences	4.12	4.42
7. Autonomy provides opportunities for schools to be more responsive to local differences	4.21	4.42
8. Autonomy is necessary for the realization of school improvement.	3.94	4.42
9. Autonomy requires a more complex role for the school principal.	4.34	4.92
10. Autonomy requires more complex roles for the teachers.	4.38	4.75
11. Autonomy means that teachers assume responsibility for the curriculum.	4.04	4.50
12. Autonomy cannot succeed in the absence of strong principal leadership.	3.68	4.25
13. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the State.	2.71	3.17
14. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the individual school.	3.70	3.17
15. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is a shared responsibility of the school and the State.	3.79	4.17
Total: Statements of autonomy	3.91	4.18
Total: Statements of autonomy without #13 *	3.99	4.25
Total: Statements of autonomy without #13-#15 *	4.03	4.35
(Scale: 1 = disagree strongly, 5 = agree strongly)		

*   The research is not definitive regarding the certainty at which level the evaluation of final outcomes of schooling should be. The research is definitive that it does not rest alone at the level of the State. For an explanation regarding this, please read the written results.

Perceptions of School-Based Education Communities and Policy Makers
Regarding Adoption and Implementation of Reforms in
Italian Schools: Italian Schools and the Four Regions

Section/Item	Total Sample n=217	Lazio Total n=30	Lombardy Total n=7	Sicily Total n=63	Tuscany Total n=53
GENERAL PRIORITIES					
1. Curriculum development	4.27	4.51	4.21	4.28	4.19
2. Improving pedagogical practices	4.20	4.11	4.07	4.39	4.23
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)	4.26	3.88	4.40	4.41	4.11
4. Professional development of administrators	3.96	3.76	3.97	4.09	3.89
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning	4.18	3.95	4.15	4.28	4.23
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning	4.10	3.97	4.09	4.08	4.21
7. Focus on assessment of student progress	3.90	3.50	3.84	4.15	3.91
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff	4.05	3.83	3.96	4.18	4.15
9. Dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal	4.03	3.87	3.86	4.30	4.04
10. Collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff	4.02	3.90	3.80	4.24	4.13
11. Collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff	4.09	3.74	3.89	4.46	4.09
12. Participation of parents in school decision making	3.23	2.67	3.08	3.67	3.25
13. Participation of parents in school planning	2.63	1.82	2.45	3.24	2.60
Total: General Priorities (Scale: 1 = low, 5 = high)	3.92	3.65	3.83	4.14	3.92

SCHOOL PRIORITIES

1. Curriculum development	4.11	4.20	4.26	3.92	4.08
2. Improving pedagogical practices	3.99	3.97	4.00	3.98	4.00
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)	4.03	4.13	4.26	3.83	3.91
4. Professional development of administrators	3.78	3.59	3.90	3.58	3.97
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning	4.01	4.03	4.07	4.02	3.91
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning	3.97	4.10	4.01	3.76	4.09
7. Focus on assessment of student progress	3.87	3.80	4.03	3.80	3.77

Section/Item	Total Sample n=217	Lazio Total n=30	Lombardy Total n=71	Sicily Total n=63	Tuscany Total n=53
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff	3.94	4.00	4.00	3.77	4.02
9. Dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal	3.95	3.70	3.98	3.93	4.05
10. Collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff	3.94	3.77	4.01	3.86	4.03
14. Collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff	3.95	3.70	4.07	3.87	4.02
15. Participation of parents in school decision making	3.19	2.77	3.44	3.13	3.16
16. Participation of parents in school planning	2.60	1.97	2.72	2.68	2.71
Total: School Priorities (Scale: 1 = low, 5 = high)	3.79	3.67	3.90	3.70	3.82

ACTUAL PRIORITIES

1. Curriculum development	3.17	2.74	3.22	3.26	3.23
2. Improving pedagogical practices	3.24	3.20	3.15	3.44	3.13
3. Professional staff development (instructional staff)	3.64	3.53	3.55	3.75	3.67
4. Professional development of administrators	3.16	2.79	3.26	3.28	3.10
5. Whole-school focus on teaching and learning	3.23	3.13	3.26	3.40	3.07

	Total Sample	Lazio Total	Lombardy Total	Sicily Total	Tuscany Total
6. Resources allocated primarily for improving teaching and learning	3.38	3.31	3.34	3.31	3.57
7. Focus on assessment of student progress	3.21	2.73	3.26	3.50	3.09
8. Dialogue among school teaching staff	3.22	3.00	3.31	3.39	3.04
9. Dialogue between school teaching staff and the principal	3.42	3.19	3.42	3.49	3.46
10. Collegial decision making among administrators and instructional staff	3.38	3.08	3.45	3.52	3.28
11. Collaborative planning among administrators and instructional staff	3.37	3.21	3.32	3.40	3.50
12. Participation of parents in school decision making	3.00	2.77	3.13	3.03	2.94
13. Participation of parents in school planning	2.24	2.07	2.28	2.22	2.29
Total: Actual Priorities	3.21	2.98	3.23	3.31	3.18
(Scale: 1 = not addressed, 2 = discussed, 3 = planned, 4 = implemented)					

CAPACITY FACTORS

	Total Sample	Lazio Total	Lombardy Total	Sicily Total	Tuscany Total
1. The principal, teachers, and parents share a common vision for the school.	3.66	3.60	3.92	3.60	3.43
2. The community has esteem for and values the school.	3.68	3.40	3.87	3.66	3.60
8. The school has the ability to deal with turbulence and controversy.	3.85	3.57	3.97	4.06	3.60

Section/Item	Total Sample n=217	Lazio Total n=30	Lombardy Total n=71	Sicily Total n=63	Tuscany Total n=53
9. The school is student focused.	4.37	4.47	4.35	4.42	4.28
5. Education is demonstrably the primary purpose of the school.	4.53	4.43	4.58	4.61	4.43
6. Different responsibilities are given to different people in order to maximize each individual's contribution.	3.87	3.63	3.92	3.97	3.85
7. Educators within the school are not afraid to document student progress.	3.78	3.50	3.88	3.77	3.80
8. The principal assumes the role of facilitator in the change process.	4.21	4.30	4.09	4.35	4.17
9. The principal shares authority with the teachers.	3.85	3.56	3.86	3.83	4.20
10. The principal encourages teachers to assume leadership roles.	3.73	3.60	3.79	3.74	3.71
11. Some teachers in the school have been assigned leadership roles.	3.62	3.57	3.61	3.69	3.56

12. Some teachers have assumed leadership roles.	3.46	3.48	3.36	3.56	3.46
13. In general, the teachers are committed to improvement.	3.56	3.30	3.59	3.71	3.47
14. Teachers routinely use reflection to improve the curriculum or their lessons.	4.01	3.77	4.03	4.13	3.98
15. Time is set aside for collaborative work among teachers to improve teaching.	3.56	3.29	3.79	3.60	3.34
16. The principal is committed to his/her own professional development.	4.42	4.60	4.52	4.48	4.12
17. Teachers, in general, are committed to professional development.	4.03	3.93	4.16	4.00	3.96
18. Instructional staff are provided opportunities for professional development directly related to new initiatives in the school.	3.69	3.33	3.90	3.80	3.47
19. The exchange of ideas is encouraged.	3.90	3.83	4.07	3.73	3.92
20. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in developing new activities.	4.19	4.17	4.15	4.35	4.06
21. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in implementing new activities.	4.13	4.13	4.13	4.28	3.96
22. Administrators encourage teacher involvement in evaluating new activities.	4.06	3.97	4.07	4.22	3.89
23. We learn from our mistakes in our school.	4.09	3.97	4.10	4.35	3.83
24. We use our failures as opportunities to reevaluate practices and assumptions.	4.01	4.03	3.87	4.40	3.74
25. We use our failures to propose changes in curriculum or approaches to teaching.	3.86	3.80	3.68	4.19	3.73
Total: Capacity (Scale: 1 = low/never, 5 = high/always	3.92	3.81	3.97	4.02	3.82

Section/Item	Total Sample n=217	Lazio Total n=30	Lombardy Total n=71	Sicily Total n=63	Tuscany Total n=53
OBSTACLES TO CHANGE					
1. Balancing local and central needs	2.88	2.60	2.90	2.85	3.06
2. Complexity/comprehensiveness of reforms	3.43	3.70	3.40	3.26	3.51
3. Lack of clarity regarding the reforms	3.50	3.45	3.61	3.38	3.55

4. Confusion over how to implement reforms	3.41	3.40	3.41	3.34	3.52
5. Lack of resources	3.55	3.60	3.19	3.78	3.75
6. The additional work/time associated with improvement and change	2.79	3.11	2.74	2.78	2.68
7. Lack of preparedness for teachers	2.80	2.79	2.54	2.95	2.98
8. Lack of preparedness for the principal	2.41	2.06	2.30	2.37	2.79
9. Lack of motivation among teachers	2.89	2.66	2.87	2.85	3.09
10. Lack of motivation of the principal	2.49	2.06	2.51	2.36	2.84
11. Lack of incentives for teachers	3.32	3.28	3.21	3.40	3.40
12. Lack of incentives for the principal	2.76	2.66	2.74	2.71	2.92
13. Lack of skills/competencies in the teachers	2.60	2.44	2.41	2.71	2.81
14. Lack of skills/competencies in the principal	2.34	2.21	2.21	2.31	2.62
15. Reluctance of people to assume additional professional responsibilities	2.85	2.93	2.88	2.69	2.97
16. Professional educational organizations and trade unions working at cross-purposes	2.70	2.77	2.68	2.43	3.00
17. Lack of support from the Ministry	3.31	3.20	3.24	3.29	3.50
18. Lack of understanding regarding how to link autonomous management and instructional goals.	3.03	3.10	2.92	2.81	3.38
19. Attempts to do too much at once	3.24	3.57	3.02	3.09	3.50
20. Lack of parental support	2.76	2.53	2.54	2.89	3.01
21. Lack of community support	2.72	2.18	2.42	3.02	3.06
22. Politics getting in the way	2.52	2.16	2.42	2.61	2.76
23. Psychological anxiety regarding changing the way things are done	2.82	3.25	2.76	2.73	2.79
24. Psychological anxiety over losing control of one's work life	2.61	2.81	2.65	2.42	2.69
25. Lack of time for teachers to interact collaboratively for educational planning/development	2.96	3.16	2.76	2.92	3.17
26. Fear of accountability	2.49	2.48	2.37	2.48	2.66
27. The tradition of centralization in Italian schools	2.84	2.85	2.75	2.67	3.16
28. An unconscious desire on the part of teachers to be directed	2.42	2.53	2.36	2.33	2.55

Section/Item	Total Sample n=217	Lazio Total n=30	Lombardy Total n=71	Sicily Total n=63	Tuscany Total n=53
29. An unwillingness on the part of teachers to change their practices	2.82	2.83	2.83	2.61	3.05
30. A fear on the part of teachers to take risks	2.59	2.67	2.51	2.50	2.75
Total: Obstacles to Change (Scale: 1 = low negative influence, 4 = high negative influence)	2.86	2.83	2.77	2.82	3.05

STATEMENTS OF AUTONOMY

	Total Sample n=217	Lazio Total n=30	Lombardy Total n=71	Sicily Total n=63	Tuscany Total n=53
1. Autonomy means that decisions are made by people at the school level.	4.07	3.94	4.23	4.00	4.04
9. Autonomy fosters more creativity within the school.	4.22	4.24	4.28	4.26	4.08
10. One of the aims of autonomy is to put theory and practice together.	3.68	3.56	3.63	3.84	3.62
11. Autonomy encourages building local capacity.	3.98	3.87	4.07	4.14	3.74
12. If local capacity is not developed, autonomy cannot succeed.	3.70	3.37	3.67	3.96	3.62
13. Autonomy provides opportunities for schools to be more responsive to local differences.	4.12	4.07	4.03	4.26	4.12
7. Autonomy allows the individual school to be more responsive to its students.	4.21	4.27	4.23	4.30	4.04
8. Autonomy is necessary for the realization of school improvement.	3.94	3.93	3.87	4.08	3.89
9. Autonomy requires a more complex role for the school principal.	4.34	4.27	4.31	4.42	4.34
10. Autonomy requires more complex roles for the teachers.	4.38	4.23	4.38	4.46	4.36
11. Autonomy means that teachers assume responsibility for the curriculum.	4.04	4.07	3.94	4.16	4.00
12. Autonomy cannot succeed in the absence of strong principal leadership.	3.68	3.49	3.70	3.82	3.60
13. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the State.	2.71	2.10	2.66	2.80	3.02
19. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is the responsibility of the individual school.	3.70	3.77	3.70	4.00	3.32
20. Evaluation of final outcomes of schooling is a shared responsibility					

of the school and the State.	3.79	3.25	3.88	3.87	3.89
Total: Statements of autonomy	3.91	3.76	3.91	4.02	3.84
Total: Statements of autonomy without #13 *	3.99	3.88	4.00	4.11	3.90
Total: Statements of autonomy without #13-#15 *	4.03	3.94	4.03	4.14	3.95

(Scale: 1 = disagree strongly, 5 = agree strongly)

* The research is not definitive regarding the certainty at which level the evaluation of final outcomes of schooling should be. The research is definitive that it does not rest alone at the level of the State. For an explanation regarding this, please read the written results.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES: A LESSON FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS

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Although cooperative learning has been used extensively over the last ten years, the art of facilitating cooperative groups still remains elusive. Clearly, successful cooperative learning requires knowledge of the structural format, understanding of the theory, and the ability to successfully apply this knowledge in classrooms. This article examines the multifaceted issues of cooperative activities and suggests ways in which cooperative activities may enhance pedagogical as well as learning activities among teachers and learners.

INTRODUCTION

Cooperative learning is an instructional method for students that involve various features. Cooperative learning can meet the needs of students in the following areas: competence and achievement; self-exploration and definition; social interaction with peers, physical activity; meaningful participation in school; routine, limits, and structure; diversity; opportunities to explore concepts and generate ideas from concrete experiences; and opportunities to explore values and decision making (Kellough and Kellough, 1996). Cooperative learning also facilitates heterogeneous grouping, project centered instruction, active learning, and a structured channeling of peer influence (Jewett, 1999).

How is cooperative learning organized? Essentially, cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups. Students work together to achieve goals they have designed themselves. Groups that are cohesive, trust one another, and provide emotional security provide the most potentially cognitive benefits to participants. Cooperative learning is always done in a social context that can be vital to group learning. Learning the skills of group process and group work is a valuable benefit of cooperative learning that can produce teamwork skills valued by society. Specific attention to social and emotional features of small-group dynamics can also be instrumental in fostering social support and emotional ties among peers, which are factors known to have a significant impact on student self-esteem (Cuesco, 1992).

According to Kagan, an organized approach to cooperative learning produces teachers well versed in a variety of team structures who can create skillful lessons using these structures to engage and enlighten their students. Kagan (1989/90) defines the structural approach to cooperative learning as based on the creation, analysis and systematic application of structures, or content-free ways of organizing social interaction in the classroom. These structures involve a step by step process, with certain behaviors expected at each step. When a teacher uses five basic structures, for example, that teacher could include cooperative learning in lessons throughout the year to further the academic progress of students in any subject matter, merely by

utilizing a specific structured pattern. Each structure, or building block, provides a learning experience upon which subsequent structures expand. This process leads to academic, cognitive, and social objectives and outcomes.

IMPLEMENTING KAGAN'S APPROACH WHILE TEACHING PRESERVICE TEACHERS ABOUT COOPERATIVE LEARNING

A study of 100 preservice teachers in a curriculum and instruction block course that included children's literature, reading methods, and methods of instruction brought in an outside expert on cooperative learning. Specific objectives for introducing cooperative learning included: improving higher order levels of thinking, promoting achievement, and improving motivation and self-esteem. An added benefit of this pedagogy involved providing social awareness and tolerance of differences.

The expert who came to a large group session to introduce cooperative learning was Dot Schuler (1999), a second grade teacher in a public school in Southern Illinois, who uses cooperative learning extensively in her own classroom. Schuler defined cooperative learning as having five elements: positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, social skills, group processing, and individual accountability. All of these elements are highly valued in schools and in the workplace in the twenty-first century. Schuler also discussed the five functions of cooperative learning, which she defined as teambuilding, class building, mastery, thinking skills, information sharing, and communication skills. Every state that has learning standards in addition to National Standard boards emphasizes these elements and stresses the importance of each one. Finally, Schuler gave students two separate models they could do based on Kagan's structural systems (1991).

The first structure was described as the *Three-Step Interview*. In this structure, students sat in teams of four and interviewed each other in pairs. When they had finished, they did a round robin sharing of information learned in the interview. As the students did this activity, they were all learning about the elements and functions of cooperative learning and how to use these features in a structured way. Students shared their interview summaries at the end of the activity.

The second structure was called *Numbered Heads Together*. In this structure students also sat in teams. The teacher posed a question and allowed students additional time to think about the question. Next students checked to make sure each one knew the answer or at least had an idea about an answer. After the students discussed their knowledge and understanding, the teacher called out a number, and since each student in the group was assigned a number of 1,2,3, or 4, all students having the number called out stood up. One of the students who had risen answered the question. Those who agreed sat down. Students who remained standing, gave their answers, and if other students still standing found a similar answer they also sat down. Instead of providing a rote, one-way answer to the teacher's question, this strategy allows all students to participate in the cooperative learning group and offer

multi-faceted answers. It is a good idea for the teacher to come up with questions that do not call for simple, "yes" or "no" answers.

Schuler ended the session with a learning activity with the students that involved cooperative learning utilizing a project approach (Katz, 1989; Chard, 1998a.and 1998b; Pelander, 1997; Williams, K.C. 1997; Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C, 1997; Sharan, Schlomo, and Y. Sharan, 1991, Kandel, E.R. and R.D. Hawkins, 1992; Trepanier-Street, M, 1992). The project activity involved having students discover what they wanted to learn about keys. Graphs, charts, original stories, poems, and plays, as well as surveys were just some of the many different ways students described their knowledge of keys. Some students wanted to discover how many keys each student had; others wished to find out the kind of car doors to the vehicles owned by students. Still others drew a variety of different participant's keys researched. A final group wrote a beautiful poem about the diversity of keys.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Students in all of the block classes continued to practice cooperative learning strategies and to take these strategies into their field experiences. Each student was assigned to a public K-8 school. They designed a variety of lessons to teach at these schools, but at least one of their lessons involved cooperative learning. In addition to the structural models Schuler provided, other models were introduced. A Think-Pair-Share model (Lyman, 1987) allowed students to think about specific children's literature books that they had brought in to class, decide what they liked or disliked about these books and share their findings with one another. The Think-Pair-Share model was practiced every week in class when sharing books from various genres with one another. Students rated this model highly because progress occurred in skills such as high-level learning, motivation, social awareness, and interest in other's books. At the end of the Think-Pair-Share session, students shared their favorite books with the entire class.

Another model that was often used was assigning the students numbers with a designation, such as: *1*, the quiet captain; *2*, the task master; *3*, the group leader; *4*, the encourager and *5*, the recorder. The function of each member was to: (1) maintain order for the group (2) make sure the group is focused (3) suggest questions, encourage participation by everyone and keep the group motivated (4) praise students in the group for their participation (5) write what is happening in the group and what results are found. This model (Kagan, 1992) worked well with a variety of activities, such as assessing student lesson plans, reviewing field work, and reviewing portfolios.

Pairs of students could also work together on an original, illustrated book for children. Students who were stronger in illustrating skills often chose to provide the pictures for their books, while those stronger in composing wrote the stories. Other times, students collaborated on both the text and the illustrations. Finals projects were

outstanding, based on clarity of the story, appeal of the story, structure of the story, and connection of illustrations to the text.

A final grouping was based on Daniel's (1997) work on Literature Circles. This grouping was based on the philosophy that students learn through interaction with others (Cambourne, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978; Smith, 1995) and that students need to experience choices often in order to take responsibility for their learning (Atwell, 1991; Brooks & Brooks, 1993).

For Literature Circles, students read difficult young adult books of their group's choice. They assigned specific roles to each member of the group (Daniels, 1994):

Literary Luminator
Identifies interesting sections of the text the group would like to read aloud

Connector
Makes text-to-text and text-to-life connections

Word Finder
Looks for special words in the story, words that are new, different, strange, funny, and interesting

Discussion Director
Develops a list of questions to discuss with the group

Illustrator
Draws, shares, and receives input about a section of the story he/she found interesting.

The majority of the students worked extensively on their books and met together in groups outside of class time. When they came in to discuss their book in class, using their assigned roles, they held lively, relevant, interesting, entertaining, and informative discussions, based on the researcher's observations. For example, students became empowered to choose their own roles and identities. Since they had also chosen their own book, they were much more interested not only in the content of the book, but also in sharing their ideas about the book with one another. A recorder wrote a group summary and every person in the group listed their reaction to the book read. While each group was involved in the discussion of a particular book, the researcher found the author and book read for each group on the Internet and gave each of the groups time to review what had already been written and discussed about their books on the web. Many students had already checked out these web sites and said they found them useful. The overall consensus of this model was that it was extremely effective. Many of the students provided this model to their students in the field, or planned to use the model to involve students in future teaching experiences.

METHODOLOGY

Students were asked four questions about their cooperative learning groups. First, they were asked if they liked the Power Point groupings, using assigned roles, such as group organizer, book sharer, handout captain, and chapter presenter. Over 90% of the students said that, although they had been apprehensive about Power Point, particularly if it was new to them, allowing the presentations to be done by the entire group was helpful to them.

Second, participants were asked how they liked the think-pair-share groups that discussed various genre children's books. Over 95% of the students rated the think-pair-share model favorably and said they preferred this method to having everyone share an individual book. They thought it was a more effective use of their time and they said they were also able to go into more depth using this method. They noted specific features of the think-pair-share structure that worked well for them, such as the intimacy they were able to achieve in a small group, the breadth and depth of their sharing, and the ability to relate a few of the outstanding books with others read by people in different groups.

The third question related to the numbered groups. Students responded favorably to this model, with over 92 percent saying they found the numbered system of a quiet captain, taskmaster, and other assigned roles, useful and productive because it kept their groups on focus and they became more efficient.

Finally, participants were asked if they thought the literature response circles utilizing cooperative learning were more effective than traditional paper and pencil tests. If they answered yes, they needed to explain why. Over 98 percent favored literature response circles. They said being allowed to choose their own books and their own roles made their group discussion much more productive because all students had specific tasks to prepare and deliver in a discussion and final summary format.

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Based on informal analysis, each class was asked to vote yes, or no, as to whether or not they found a particular model was useful to them. They were also asked if they thought this model led to success for them. Of the 96 students in class on the date the informal survey was taken, 90% of the students said they believed that all of the models were useful and helped them to succeed with a particular lesson or assignment. Discussion of how each of these cooperative learning groups improved social skills, interacted with one another, developed stronger inter and intrapersonal skills, and produced excellent course content material was also done informally. Students who said they did not like to volunteer in class said they liked the opportunity to speak out in a small group setting. A few students resented "power" figures who assumed control of a group and did not listen to suggestions by others. Students were not asked to compare and contrast which models were superior to

others, but most of the students decided to teach a model in their field sessions that was comfortable to them and that they had found relevant. A few introverted students maintained that they did not like group work, but if it was required, they were pleased that at least it involved a structural format they could work with.

DISCUSSION

In addition to the design and assessment of the models noted above, cooperative learning groups were set up through chapter presentations using Power Point technology. The researcher was fortunate to be in a smart classroom. This classroom contained a super computer, a white board for all students to be able to see presentations clearly from the computer, and the ability to show videos on a large screen.

All groups utilized Power Point, a computer graphics software package, in presenting the various chapters of a children's literature text that categorized books according to genres, such as realistic fiction, historical fiction, traditional fiction, and nonfiction. Group roles for this assignment involved a group leader, who organized the team, a member responsible for a handout which summarized key points, another member who brought in books from the genre to share that were good literary representations of the category, and all members who presented the highlights of a particular genre.

When students are given practice in cooperative learning assignments, such as the ones described in the preceding examples, they learn how to work together, how to use each member of the group's strength, and how to manage their time in a collaborative framework. Planning for cooperative learning assignments is extremely important in order to make sure that the group's process and product are efficacious. Four major strategies (Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Leonard & McElroy, 2000) help to ensure efficiency in the operation and delivery of cooperative groups. The first one is to make sure that each student has a role to play. If students are not given specific roles, they often lose interest in the project and waste time trying to figure our what part each member needs to provide to the whole group. Not only do participants need to have a specific role, but these roles also need to be clearly defined and equally important. Giving each role high status ensures that students take their roles seriously and become task-oriented.

Another important consideration that can help to ensure efficient grouping is that students consider everyone's thinking. Sometimes, a leader emerges who is not willing to consider others' contributions. Peer pressure can also interfere with dialogue. If some members fear that others will belittle their contributions, they may be hesitant to speak up. Teachers need to make sure that everyone in the group knows that they are responsible for one another and that everyone's opinions are valued.

A final strategy that is essential for efficacious delivery is careful monitoring of each group by the instructor to determine that all students are actively involved.

Students need to learn how to work together. Each member of the group needs to be given the opportunity to participate. Teacher monitoring also needs to be continued throughout the project, to make sure the group stays focused and continues to cooperate with one another.

Brozo and Simpson (2003) believe cooperative learning promotes constructive meaning making through student interaction. They reinforce Schuler's (1999) description in her class presentation about how cooperative learning helps groups become more efficient. Interdependence, accountability, interaction, and appropriate use of collaborative skills are all factors that contribute to a group's success.

All of these strategies were incorporated into the cooperative learning projects the researcher of this study conducted. Without thoughtful planning and instruction, groups will not be productive. By following specific guidelines and by giving the students strategies, such as the ones described in the preceding paragraphs, students become efficient and effective in their delivery during both process and product stages of participation.

CONCLUSION

Over 90 percent of the students in each category found cooperative learning successful. Although this was an informal oral survey done during scheduled class time, participants affirmed that others did not influence their answers. A limitation of this study was that written surveys, questionnaires, and collection of other recorded data was not formally done. Future studies could include a data collection that encompassed not only oral feedback, but documented, written feedback as well. Nevertheless, it was apparent to this researcher that cooperative learning is an important tool for applying theory and practice in both college and K-12 classrooms. Learning how to be a cooperative learner takes time, but the positive end results are worth the effort. Working together in other environmental settings is valued in many different types of jobs as well as in leisure time. The preservice teachers involved in this study said they appreciated the opportunity to learn a variety of structures they could take into their future classrooms to help their students learn more effectively.

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EDUCATION IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM:
THE ZEN OF TEAM TEACHING

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The unfolding of the new millennium has prompted educators to infuse and adopt new and innovative concepts and techniques as their method of instruction. Therefore, it is beneficial to explore paradigm shifts that will not only awaken the senses and interest of the learner, but also renew the interest and improve the skills of the educator. While some educators possess varying degrees of skill, knowledge, and experience, oftentimes the task of educating the most eager learner may become a laborious ritual. Therefore the Team Teaching Model can be utilized as a viable model for instruction. This concept will be introduced by showing how the model can promote and enhance a positive and productive learning environment that utilizes a diverse perspective. A discussion of the principles of Zen will identify the potentially negative and positive aspects of the model and the process of planning, evaluating, and strategizing the team teaching concept.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of team teaching, although not a new phenomenon, is slowing becoming an acceptable and innovative model for educators (Miller, 1999). The team teaching model provides the educator with a viable alterative to the traditional teaching model that is often plagued with the monotonous and laborious exercises and techniques utilized by the educator. By adopting this model as a nontraditional method of teaching, educators can explore a creative format in the preparation, teaching, and evaluation process.

Oftentimes, teachers can feel isolated in the classroom and disconnected from other adults (Westheimer, 1999). Furthermore, teachers who work in relative isolation may have little opportunity for professional growth and struggle to solve instructional, curricular and management problems (Lehr, 1999). Teachers who collaborate tend to have a richer work environment, better understanding of good teaching practices and receive peer assistance in improving instruction. The team teaching model provides a collaborative process for educators to assist in the implementation and infusion of diverse learning perspectives and objectives when delivering course content and respective competencies in stated disciplines.

Phil Jackson, former NBA player and head coach of the 6-time world champion Chicago Bulls and current head coach of the 2-time world champion Los Angeles Lakers basketball teams, created his philosophy of coaching by applying practices of Zen, Christianity, and Native American culture (specifically Lakota Sioux) towards coaching (Jackson & Delehanty, 1995). Jackson described the process for creating a successful team as requiring a group of individuals to "surrender their self-interest for the greater good so that the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts" (p. 5). With this in mind, it became apparent that a philosophical approach (in this case Zen) needed to be considered to develop a framework for team-teaching in order for the experience to be satisfying and successful for both the teachers and the students.

When analyzing the effectiveness of this model, it is important to consider the varying aspects of the collaborative process. Not only does the educator need to understand the dynamics of the course content to the applicability of the model, but also one needs to understand the dynamics of the union of the collaborators. This serves as a partnership of similar, and at times, diverse philosophical constructs.

It is through these philosophical constructs that the principles of Zen are essential in the understanding of Team Teaching. By reviewing some of the basic principles of Zen, one can enlist these principles throughout the collaborative process. Chodron (1990) stated that helping and appreciating our colleague's work makes them happy and builds a spirit of teamwork. This is a crucial part of the team teaching and collaborative relationship. Therefore, the tradition of Zen provides a framework for the collaborative process. A brief account of some principles of Zen will be described and then infused into the team-teaching model. Zen

Zen is a form of Buddhism that originated in China during the latter part of the fifth century and was embodied in ancient civilization of India, Tibet, China, Japan, and Korea (Trungpa, 1988). Today Zen is practiced mainly in Japan and Korea, but has become a popular phenomenon in the Western world (St. Ruth & St. Ruth, 1998). Defined by some as a "religion", "the religion of no religions", and subsequently, a "way of life", Zen is an integral part of the Japanese life. The teachings and practice of "Zen" are incorporated in almost every aspect of Japan's culture. Its goal is to create a degree of self-knowledge that results in a gain of peace of mind. Zen is defined as a "lifetime work of self-discipline and study" (Ross, 1960).

Chicago philosopher George Herbert Mead incorporated Zen, often referred to as an "Eastern religion," into Western philosophy in the 1900s (Van Meter, 1962). Zen became more popular during the 1960s when some Americans turned to the East for spiritual guidance. Zen is vast, yet will be limited to applying appropriate Zen-based concepts as a framework for team-teaching. These concepts include *mindfulness, compassion* and *restraint, commitment* and *selflessness, universal responsibility,* and *enlightenment.*

Mindfulness can be described as learning to have an open accepting attitude toward whatever arises in one's mind in the present moment. This entails becoming in tuned with what is happening in the present and observing and becoming aware of the sounds, images or sensations in the body and "quieting the judging mind"(Jackson & Delehanty, 1995, p. 117). Experiencing the moment provides the opportunity to live and enjoy the moment rather than running to the past or the future which in turn can provoke anxiety, sadness, worry, or depression (Salzberg & Kabat-Zinn, 1997). In the classroom, both teachers can invoke *mindfulness* in learning. Using Zen as a framework, teachers can create an environment of learning for the sake of learning and enjoying the class for what it is— a learning experience as opposed to getting consumed in remembering previous lectures in order to complete future assignments, papers, and take exams.

When working with a partner, the ultimate goal needs to remain with what is best for the students. However, there can be differences in opinions as to what content, teaching methods, and evaluating processes are best for a given class. Therefore, *selflessness* and *commitment* are necessary components of Zen to incorporate into team teaching. *Selflessness* and *commitment* begin with having a love for the process of teaching and learning (Jackson & Delehanty, 1995). *Selflessness* includes involving and empowering everyone to make a *commitment* to the learning process and do whatever it takes to help each student learn. There

is a Hopi saying, "One finger can't lift a pebble." This can be translated to the classroom by stating, "One person can't teach a class." Once *selflessness* is established, ego, hierarchy, individual achievement and self-importance become superseded by the attainment of knowledge and enjoyment of the process of learning.

Compassion is another term used in Zen and can be applied to interactions with the team-teaching partner and the students. *Compassion* can be defined as a feeling of empathic intimacy toward others that is unconditional, undifferentiated, and universal in scope and can include love, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, and humility (Dalai Lama, 1999). According to the Dalai Lama, enhancing our sensitivity will cultivate an overwhelming sense of responsibility toward others. *Compassion* is a constant reminder against selfishness and partiality.

Compassion, along with mutual respect offers a solid basis for relationships, which is important when choosing a team-teaching partner, communicating, and problem solving. *Compassion* helps provide the necessary foundation and motivation for both *restraint* and the cultivation of virtue. This is evident in our interactions with colleagues and can serve as a model for students (Dalai Lama, 1999). Helping our partners and our students and appreciating their input, feedback, and contributions to the class makes them happy and builds a spirit of teamwork and ownership in the class. Once hard work is recognized and praised, people become cooperative and work harder, thus enhancing the learning process (Chodron, 1990). *Compassion* creates a positive learning environment where team teachers combine with a clear appreciation of their potential to benefit the students.

Restraint can be defined as having an inner discipline to keep from responding to negative thoughts and emotions that are destructive in nature and inhibit the ability to be compassionate. According to the Dalai Lama (1999), an undisciplined mind is like an elephant where left to blunder out of control, it will create chaos. However, the emotional damage we can create by reacting on our negative impulses can be far more damaging than that of an elephant. Therefore, it is necessary to practice *restraint* in order to foster *compassion.*

Another Zen concept, *universal responsibility*, can be incorporated into the field of education. This concept requires a reorientation of our heart and mind away from self and toward others (Dalai Lama, 1999). In education, teachers should practice *universal responsibility* towards each other and the students. For example, a situation arises where students have complaints regarding an assignment being too strenuous. One teacher may feel it is in the best interest to complete the assignment where the other teacher may feel inclined to change it in order to appease the students. Based on the rationale that the assignment is in fact in the best interest of the students, both teachers should commit to what will provide the best educational opportunity and go above and beyond the call of duty to assist the students in completing the assignment instead of changing it. This demonstrates the *universal responsibility* of educators by setting an example for students that the process of learning is the most important goal for both teachers. When both teachers are committed to *universal responsibility*, the students will appreciate learning and focus more on the process than the outcome. Oftentimes, in the American culture, students are more concerned with the grade received than what was learned from the course.

When undergoing a philosophical change in life, there needs to be some goal in which to aspire. In Zen, that goal is *enlightenment.* In some Zen teachings, "...there is basic human wisdom that can help to solve the world's problems" (Trungpa, 1984, p. 25). While everyone has a responsibility to help the world, we can create additional chaos if we try to

impose our ideas upon others. Therefore, in trying to achieve an enlightened society, we must first discover what inherently we have to offer the world. By focusing on the good that we can offer, we become appreciative of the goodness in life and can in turn experience the goodness. We can experience our world as healthy and straightforward, direct and real, which can be a powerful environment for students to learn.

The Team Teaching Model

The team teaching model can be defined as a concept of collaboration designed to present information in a systematic, nontraditional and innovative format. Team members bring different specialties to the class and simply contribute their particular expertise by sharing responsibility for a group of students (Shaplin & Olds, 1964). This model provides educators and professionals an alternative method of teaching, promotes modeling, planning, evaluating and implementing course instruction (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999).

When incorporating the principles of Zen to the team teaching model, it is important to remember one of its basic tenets, which is attaining *enlightenment* (Suzuki, 1960). Therefore, when educators are preparing to impart knowledge upon the learner, it should be for the purpose of disseminating viable information to the learner. This ultimate goal includes the learner acquiring a sense of knowledge and selfhood during the instruction process.

When designing a team teaching model there are several areas that provide the foundation of the team teaching concept and should be incorporated in the design and implementation of a structured model. These areas are as follows: The Relationship of Team Collaborators, Philosophical Differences, Course Planning and Design, Roles of Team Members, and Resolution and Compromise of Differences.

Relationship of Team Collaborators

The relationship between team teachers is a very significant and integral part of the model. Thus, the success of the team teaching model reflects the relationship, level of communication and mutual respect exemplified by each team member. Teachers will be modeling professional interactions such as conflict resolution, exploration, concept evaluation, and collaboration (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999). Team members should be very mindful in selecting a *compassionate* team partner.

Choosing a Team Member. Since the relationship between team members is a critical part of the team teaching model, it is imperative that team members take careful steps in selecting a team partner. When selecting a team partner, it is important to have an understanding of each prospective team members' philosophical framework, relationship with students, course evaluation process, basic understanding of the team teaching model, goals and expectations, roles and responsibilities, core knowledge and level of expertise of the course content, and utilization of diverse teaching methods.

Prospective team partners should spend ample time discussing these issues before making a *commitment* to the collaborative process. Confusion can occur and students can receive conflicting information from the instructors (Combs & White, 2000). This effort will help alleviate a potentially negative team teaching experience and provide one of success and productivity where the process of learning becomes the focus, thus indoctrinating *mindfulness*.

Once team partners have reached a comparable level of understanding and gained insight of the team teaching model, they can then commit themselves to utilizing the team teaching model. This *commitment* can be either a verbal or written agreement between

partners. Once a relationship is established, the next step in the model is to identify and align philosophical differences.

Philosophical Differences

Philosophical differences amongst team members may result in both positive and negative influences for the collaborative relationship. Given the positive aspects of philosophical differences, *compassion* and respect can intensify a higher level of expertise, diversity and knowledge of the process that would be evident as it relates to the goals and objectives of the collaborative process. In regards to the negative influences of philosophical differences, the emergence of confusion, conflict, miscommunication and ultimately dissension between team members may greatly inhibit the productivity of the team members and the goals and objectives of the collaborative process. *Restraint* can be beneficial in minimizing these differences.

Communication. Team members should have ongoing communication during the team teaching experience. This allows for each member to enhance teaching skills by evaluating the positive and negative aspects of the collaborative process as well as individual teaching methods. Members are able to confer with each other regarding student concerns, relevant course matters and other issues or concerns that may arise during the tenure of the partnership. When *selflessness* is orchestrated into the collaborative equation, doing whatever is best and necessary for the students and the class becomes more important and larger than the partnership. Maintaining this focus can alleviate miscommunication and potential problems in course preparation and planning.

Course Planning and Design

This step in the team teaching model reflects the course structure such as a lecture, laboratory, or group format. Team members should design the instruction portion of the team-teaching experience to include equity in the dissemination of course lecture material.

Based upon the format of the course, team partners should determine and design the best possible method of instruction for the specific course. The team partners should determine what content will be delivered and by whom based upon strengths. Since educators are modeling collaboration, students should be free to benefit from the instruction and expertise of both team members as opposed to letting the relationship negatively influence the learning process (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999).

PREPARATION OF COURSE MATERIALS

Team members should prepare for course lectures and assignments in advance of the course meeting. Reviewing of course material prior to class sessions should be encouraged and practiced by both members that demonstrate their *commitment* to the learning process. Although team teaching may require taking extra time to plan a course, a successful collaboration works toward *universal responsibility*. Team members should make every effort to uphold his or her duties and responsibilities to provide the best possible learning environment for the students. Neglecting this task demonstrates a lack of *restraint* on behalf of the team members and may result in confusion and disruption of the flow of information during the course meeting (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999).

Course Syllabus

The course syllabus provides students with the details and outline of the respective subject matter. In the design of the course syllabus, team partners should collaborate on the structure and information that will be distributed to students in a concise format.

Evaluation

The evaluative design of the course includes the composition and administration of course examinations and the grading process. Team members should decide on the most effective method of measuring student's understanding of the course material with this process. Team members must collectively determine the style and format, content, and grading scale of examinations. Also, team partners should determine who would be responsible for this portion of the team teaching process.

Role of Team Members

Team members must approach the team teaching process with the understanding that their role in the collaborative process is one of availability, cooperation, and support. Team members should designate an appropriate time for student conferences and advisement as well as adhere to the time schedule of the selected course and be available for his or her designated lecture. Each member should provide students with appropriate office hours and should uphold and model *universal responsibility* for student availability.

The team must coordinate turn-taking protocol including who speaks, when and to what extent (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999). It is important that each member be aware of his or her role and not only be available for the needs of the students, but also be available for consultation with each other.

Equity and Sharing of the Teaching Load

During the design of the teach teaching model, team members should determine how they will relate information to the learners. Therefore, it is apparent that team members will share in the dissemination of information where there is equity in the teaching load. Members should determine who would be responsible for the delivery of information according to one's level of expertise, knowledge and comfort level. Given any philosophical differences, members should adopt a democratic rather than laissez faire model of resolve and communication in determining the distribution of the workload as it relates to course lectures and assignments (Greene, 1985).

Resolution & Compromise of Differences

Although team members may differ in their approach, philosophy, and style of delivery, a basis for compromise must be imminent during the collaborative experience. Team members should make every attempt to gain a basic level of understanding and acceptance of each individual's personal style and approach to the learning process (Wenger & Hornyak, 1999). Through ongoing communication and consultation, team partners will exhibit *selflessness* and show *restraint* for negative impulses in order to practice *mindfulness* during their *commitment* to the collaborative process.

Team teaching can be a beneficial method of instruction for both students and educators. Students can gain from twice the expertise, availability, energy, and diversity of the instructors. Appropriate interactions can be modeled for student professional

development. Students can learn concepts from the Zen philosophy such as experiencing *mindfulness* and *commitment* to the learning process. Also, by observing the principle of *selflessness*, students can incorporate this concept both inside and outside of the learning environment.

Educators can benefit as well from the collaborative relationship. Peer consultation and feedback can decrease isolation and create a more productive and satisfying work environment. Zen concepts of *compassion* and *restraint* toward students and colleagues can only compliment the field of education. While maintaining *universal responsibility*, educators can stay focused on the goal of education which could alleviate the possibility of stress and burnout. Using Zen as a framework for the team teaching model creates a better opportunity for *enlightenment* for both students and teachers.

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