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A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GOVERNING BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS
OF FOUR SELECTED UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS

by

Kermit R. McMurry, II

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Professor Howard C. Eckel

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 1975

TITLE

**A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GOVERNING BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS OF FOUR
SELECTED UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS**

BY

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K.R.M.

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CHAPTER I

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

One of the most significant elements of an administrative structure is a set of policies which guide the general functioning of the administrative machine. Young and Larson contend that ". . . to be without policies to govern the educational enterprise is to be without direction."¹ Although policy formulation is of major importance at all levels of public education, the major thrust of this study was directed at policy formulation in higher education. For it is here that:

Policies commit the (University) to define goals, set the strategies for reaching those goals and in general determine the long range destiny of the organization. Policy decisions are not just any decisions, but instead are those that have major impact, those that mold the organization's future. In short, policies are the "crucial" decisions that bind the (University) to important courses of action.²

Gibson, in The Challenge of Leadership in Higher Education, notes the significance of policy-making on higher education in this manner:

Policy (making) in higher education is a process by which responsible individuals determine the direction

¹Ruth C. Young and Olaf F. Larson, "The Contribution of Voluntary Organizations to Community Structure," The American Journal of Sociology, LXXI (September, 1965), p. 178.

²Barbara J. Coffey, "A Conceptual Model for the Codification of Administrative Policies and Procedures at the University of Nebraska" (A Dissertation Proposal, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1973), p. 2.

which action shall take. It involves a philosophical interpretation of institutional goals and the procedures by which they are achieved. Policy determination is an extremely complex process. It must be in harmony with the most enlightened concepts of social processes, procedures and methods of a free society.³

The responsibility for the policy-making process in higher education is vested in boards of trustees or boards of regents. The broad authority of governing boards caused Samuel P. Capen, former Chancellor of the University of Buffalo, to declare that they constitute a "simon pure example of authoritarian government."⁴ Indeed, they are endowed with broad powers. Morton A. Rauh has pointed out that, "in most cases the enabling charter or legislation gives the board full power to manage the institution."⁵ Ruml and Morrison, after asserting that trustees have final responsibility and authority for the performance of their institutions, declared that ". . . they may abdicate from their position of authority, but they cannot destroy them; they may delegate activities and decisions but they cannot thereby avoid their responsibility. Despite their authority, seldom are they required to account to any higher authority for their stewardship."⁶

³Raymond C. Gibson, The Challenge of Leadership in Higher Education (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company, Publishers, 1964), p. 74.

⁴John J. Corson, Governance of Colleges and Universities (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), p. 49.

⁵Morton A. Rauh, College and University Trusteeship (Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1959), p. 13.

⁶Beardsley Ruml and Donald H. Morrison, Memo to a College Trustee (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), p. 24.

Another characteristic of governing boards is that often they want to implement policy as well as formulate it. This practice does not make for a smooth running organization.

Heneman holds this view of board responsibilities:

Governing boards should seek to establish policies. Once policies have been systematically defined and approved by it, the governing board should permit the administration to conduct its affairs within the framework of these policies.⁷

It is a widely held principle in the study of education that a clear separation between policy formulation and administrative action is essential for effective organization; and earlier students of public administration also recognized the same principle.⁸

Herron echoes the same sentiment when he states that: "the board should not initiate policy but devise the structure to create policy."⁹ He goes on to note that "although the board is the highest level for organization for policy authorization, experience has shown that delegation is the wisest course in policy implementation."¹⁰

Corson¹¹ indicates that since boards are composed primarily

⁷Harlow J. Heneman, "Opportunities for Improved Management in Higher Education," Financing Higher Education, 1960-70, ed. Dexter M. Kreezer (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959), p. 123.

⁸John Walton, Administration and Policy Making in Education (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 52.

⁹Orley R. Herron, The Role of the Trustee (Scranton, Pennsylvania: International Textbook Company, 1969), p. 23.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 23.

¹¹Corson, op. cit., p. 58.

of laymen, it may cause a deficiency that might impede the university's progress, due to a lack of an understanding of the policy-making process. Therefore, there appears to be a need to determine whether governing boards have actually formulated policies or merely dealt in formulating administrative regulations, or educational goals (objectives).

It is hoped that this study will contribute to the future formulation of board policy by governing boards of university systems, and also serve as a guide through which these boards might evaluate the scope and comprehensiveness of board policy.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Under the American system of higher education, central authority for the control of such institutions has primarily been vested in a lay board. Establishing board policies under which an educational institution will operate is the legislative responsibility of governing boards. These policies, in addition to being formulated, should be recorded, published, and made known to all parties concerned.

One of the governing board's important tasks is to insure the publication of codified statements that define the over-all policies and procedures of the institutions under its jurisdiction.

The problem of this study was to investigate governing board policy statements of the university systems in the "Big Eight" Conference

¹²Ben C. Fisher, Duties and Responsibilities of College and University Trustees (Raleigh, North Carolina: North Carolina Board of Higher Education, 1969), p. 8.

by means of a content analysis. The scope of coverage of these policy statements was analyzed.

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to investigate policy statements promulgated by the governing board of each of the university systems: (1) to determine whether policy statements are indeed statements of policy, or whether they are in fact educational goals (objectives), or whether they are administrative regulations, and (2) to compare the governing board policies of the selected university systems with a standardized index of a comprehensive list of governing board policies for the purpose of identifying voids where policies might be needed.

THE PROCEDURE

Governing boards have the ultimate authority for managing institutions of higher education. This task is accomplished by several different methods, but primarily through the policy-making process.

This requires that policy be formulated in such a manner so as to serve as a guideline for execution of the policy by the chief administrative officer. The efficient operation of the university or college depends on a clear delineation between policy formulation and policy implementation. Therefore, the following procedure was utilized to carry out the study.

Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed included that which related to (1) the

development of the lay board of trustees, (2) the origins of university systems in higher education, (3) the role of the president in board policy, and (4) review of the characteristics of board policies with emphasis on the distinctive aspects of policies, educational goals (objectives) and administrative regulations. This review is found in Chapter II.

Selection of the Institutions

The four university systems used for this study were selected because they constitute the only university systems within the "Big Eight" Conference.

To initiate the study, a letter was sent to the Corporate Secretary at each of the four university systems. This letter explained the nature of the study and its purposes. The cooperation of the Corporate Secretary at each school was solicited. A request was made for materials appropriate to aid in the study. These materials included manuals, procedural guides, bylaws, and other public documents which incorporate policy action written and approved by the governing boards of each of the participating university systems.

A telephone call was initiated to each of the board secretaries as a follow-up of the letter. Each Corporate Secretary forwarded to the writer all policy documents which, at the time of the study, had been written and approved by the governing board's of the participating university systems.

Determine Existence and Appraisal of Policies

The initial phase of this study was to analyze governing board policy statements for presence or absence of policy. The instrument used for this portion of the study were indexes from a study completed by Charles Utermohlen.¹³

The second phase of this study was to analyze governing board policies by means of a content analysis to determine whether policy statements are indeed statements of policy, or whether they are in fact educational goals (objectives), or whether they are administrative regulations.

DELIMITATIONS

The study was restricted to the four "Big Eight" Conference university systems. They include: The University of Nebraska System, The University of Kansas System, The Iowa State System,* and the University of Missouri System.

The study was restricted to policy statements written and approved by governing boards of the several institutions. The writer assumed that these statements represented the official positions of each governing board on the various items under consideration.

¹³Charles R. Utermohlen, "Administrative Policies in Big Eight Universities" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1968), pp. 79-223.

*The Iowa Governing Board also governs the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School and the Iowa School for the Deaf.

The index used to determine scope of coverage was dictated by the policy outline or index developed by Charles Utermohlen.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used:

A policy. A general and comprehensive statement of a decision, principle, or course of action, coherent with established goals, formulated to serve as a guideline in the settlement of related problems of a specific or individual nature.¹⁴

Administrative regulation (rules and regulations). Implementation of policy which specifies what will be done, who will do it, and how it will be done.

Goals. The ultimate end result toward which the educational enterprise is directed.

Objectives. Direction, in the judgment of lay constituents, in the course the university or college should proceed; with specified criteria for reaching the stated outcomes.

Official statements. Those policy statements written and approved by the governing board of a university or college.

Multi-campus university system. Two or more distinct and semi-autonomous public institutions of higher education located in

¹⁴Louis A. Sullivan, "Policy-making and Implementation by Boards of Education" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1965), p. 6.

a state, with all campuses administered by a single governing board.

Multi-campus governing board. A board that is legally charged with the direct control and operation of a state university or college system, or a particular institution that has more than one campus within a state.¹⁵

Governing board (board of regents/board of trustees). The legally-appointed governing board of a university or college.¹⁶

Bylaws. The rules which govern the organization and operation of the governing board.¹⁷

President (chancellor). The chief administrative officer of a college or university.

Content analysis. A systematic procedure for the categorization of written (or verbal) data for the purposes of classification, summarization and tabulation.¹⁸

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

This study is predicated on the assumption that there is a need to investigate and analyze policy statements promulgated by governing

¹⁵J. L. Zwingle and Mabel E. Rogers, State Boards Responsible for Higher Education, 1970 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1970), p. 89.

¹⁶Utermohlen, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸David J. Fox, The Research Process in Education (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston Publishing Company, 1969), p. 646.

boards of university systems to establish whether or not these bodies are acting beyond their delegated responsibility.

It is further assumed that a review of written policy statements is an appropriate source and procedure to use in accomplishing this task.

PREVIEW

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It can be a noble public service to act as the trustee of an institution of higher learning. And it can be noble because we should be helping to fulfill the essential role in our society of supporting and encouraging thoughtful people to preserve, advance and extend the acceptance of that truth which will make men free.¹

Institutions of higher education are confronted with the many-sided and difficult problems of providing opportunity for an ever-increasing number of persons who desire and are qualified to continue their education. It is of the utmost importance that colleges and universities operate at maximum efficiency.²

The efficiency of an American college or university depends in large measures on how well various contributors to the policy-making process collaborate in wise policy-making and the execution of these policies. This chapter shall concern itself with a review of the literature concerning one of the primary contributors in the policy-making process--the lay governing board. Also found in this review is: (I) the development of the multi-campus college and university system, (II) the role of the president in the policy-making process, and (III) characteristics of governing board policy.

¹Gerald P. Burns, Administrators in Higher Education: Their Functions and Coordination (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1962), p. 79; citing Ardway Tead, Trustees, Teachers, Students: Their Role in Higher Education (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1951).

²Ibid., p. 79.

THE LAY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Origins

Generally, most colleges and universities in the United States have historically been controlled by governing boards composed almost entirely of laymen, that is, not faculty members, but members of other organizations or professions which form a "bridge" between the academic community and the general public.

Daniel H. Perlman asserts that "students of the matter agree that the governance of American colleges and universities by so called laymen dates back to the beginning of higher education in America."³ A variety of distinguished historians and university administrators has suggested that the lay governing board is unique to America and was invented on these shores. Those historians and administrators who have suggested an American origin for the lay board of trustees include: Robert Hutchins,⁴ Edward Elliott and M. M. Chambers,⁵ Charles Coolidge,⁶

³Daniel H. Perlman, College and University Governing Boards in the United States 1972 (Chicago, Illinois: Roosevelt University, 1972).

⁴Robert M. Hutchins, The Higher Learning in America (New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1936).

⁵Edward Elliott and M. M. Chambers, The Government of Higher Education (New York: American Book Company, 1935).

⁶Charles Coolidge, "Training for Trustees," Association of American Colleges Bulletin, XLII (December, 1956).

Morton A. Rauh,⁷ S. V. Mortorana,⁸ and Orley Herron.⁹

On the other hand, a small number of scholars, including William Cowley,¹⁰ James Conant,¹¹ Earl McGrath,¹² and historians John Brubacher and Willis Rudy¹³ believe that the lay board can be traced back to earlier European practices.

Brubacher and Rudy, in their discussion of the subject, stated:

Although even Harvard was not immune to Scottish influence, it was at William and Mary that it was felt most directly. The Charter Blair obtained for the Virginia school resembled that of a Scottish "uni-college" institution. Like Aberlieen, Gleasgow, King and Marischal, it incorporated both a university and a degree-granting college by a single letter patent. At the same time, a governing board was created made up of members of the nonacademic community, in characteristic

⁷Morton A. Rauh, College and University Trusteeship (Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1959).

⁸S. V. Mortorana, College Boards of Trustees (Washington, D. C.: The Center for Applied Research, 1963).

⁹Orley R. Herron, The Role of the Trustee (Scranton, Pennsylvania: International Textbook Company, 1969).

¹⁰William Cowley, "The Administration of American Colleges and Universities," University Administration Practice, ed. Oswald Nielsen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Graduate School of Business, 1959).

¹¹James Conant, The Citadel of Learning (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956).

¹²Earl McGrath, "The Control of Higher Education in America," The Educational Record, XVII (April, 1936).

¹³John Brubacher and Willis Rudy, Higher Education in Transition, An American History--1636-1956 (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1958).

Scottish fashion, to have read administrative authority over the college.¹⁴

Cowley credits the Council of Florence with establishing the first lay governing board in 1348. In a report on the subject, he concluded that:

European universities have followed two historical patterns of government, the French and the Italian. American colleges seesawed between the two until the beginning of the nineteenth century and then chose the Italian I call it the historic Italian plan, but the Americans got it from the Scottish universities which had copied it from the University of Heydon, which in turn had adopted it from the Italian universities.¹⁵

The chief difference between the French and Italian universities was in the administrative control of the institution. The former placed the government of the institutions in the hands of the faculty. In medieval Italian universities, on the other hand, the students were the group in power: they held all administrative posts and made both administrative and legislative decisions.¹⁶ When this control was lost by the students in an evolutionary process encompassing many decades, Cowley points out "student control waned after a number of years and the civil authorities took control by appointing lay bodies of non-academic people to govern the professors and protect them from the harsh rule of the students."¹⁷

¹⁴Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁵Cowley, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

¹⁶Martorana, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁷Cowley, op. cit., p. 8.

Burns made a similar point when he stated:

In the Italian universities, the students employed the teachers and retained control until the 15th Century, at which point the municipal authorities assumed leadership through bodies similar to modern American boards of trustees. This appears to be the earliest instance of what is now termed the trusteeship.¹⁸

Utermohlen concluded that: in America the external lay boards become the traditional governing body in colonial colleges; a tradition which was continued after the Revolution. He further suggested that, when used in reference to the early boards, the term laymen did not carry a professional connotation but served to identify someone who was outside the internal structure of the college.¹⁹

Membership of Boards

Members of the clergy were commonly found on the governing boards of the early American colleges. They constituted the majority on most boards and at Yale they comprised the total governing body.

The large proportion of clergymen in the early years is understandable when one realizes the purpose for which early institutions of higher learning were established. Tewksbury, who investigated social forces behind the development of higher education in America before the Civil War, stated:

¹⁸Gerald Burns, Trustees in Higher Education: Their Functions and Coordination (Independent College Funds of America, Inc., 1966), p. 4.

¹⁹Charles Utermohlen, "Administrative Policies in Big Eight Universities" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1968), pp. 13-14.

The movement for the founding of colleges in America before the Civil War was identified with the rise and growth of religious denominations in this country, and thus it came to partake of the dominant religious character of the formative period of our history and reflects the motives and interests of a religious era. It is a well known fact that our colonial colleges were largely religious in origin and character, but it is not so well understood that, with the exceptions of a few state universities, practically all the colleges founded between the Revolution and the Civil War were organized, supported, and in most cases controlled by religious interests. Thus, it may be truly said that the "denominational college" was the prevailing American college of the middle period of our history, as it was of the colonial period.²⁰

Burns cited several additional reasons for strong clerical control.

First, the clerics were frequently the best educated men in the community. Second, these churchmen provided valuable professional guidance, since one of the primary purposes of the early college was to train ministers. Third, as leaders in the communities, the men of God offered a logical link between the college, the church and the community.²¹

Noticeable changes began to take place in the composition of governing boards after the Revolution. Although clergymen at first prevailed on the collegiate governing boards, their usefulness in an increasingly secular United States was seriously questioned. Rudolph summarized this change by noting:

The first college governing board to include no ministers at all must have been the founding board of the college of

²⁰ Donald G. Tewksbury, The Founding of American Colleges and Universities Before the Civil War (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1932), pp. 55-56.

²¹ Gerald P. Burns, Administrators in Higher Education: Their Functions and Coordination (Independent College Funds of America, 1962), p. 6.