

*"Every novelty does some hurt,
for it unsettles what is established."
Bacon - 'Of Innovations'*

AN EXAMINATION OF THE IDEA OF
DECISION MAKING CONSENSUS
APPLIED TO EDUCATIONAL
INNOVATIONS IN FOUR COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to make an examination of decision making with a particular emphasis on consensus in the process of innovation.

Four countries provide the context - Indonesia, Malaysia, the Länd (State) of Nordrhein-Westfalen in the Federal Republic of Germany, and New Zealand.

The study has two purposes. To examine;

1. The relationship between concordance between specific, but interdependent groups in each society and the nature of the innovation, and,
2. The degree of consensus among those same groups.

The theoretical foundation is a simplified version of a Parsonian position, based on normative consensus within a social system.

The data base was derived from three sources. The main source was;

- (a) A data gathering instrument called an innovation dossier which was completed by respondents in each of the countries studied, and who were closely involved with the innovations as part of a research project involving seven countries, which agreed to work together on the problem of educational innovation under the auspices of UNESCO's International Institute for Planning, IIEP, in Paris. An important source of background information was;
- (b) The working draft of a book to be published for the IIEP by UNESCO, edited by Raymond S. Adams and David Chen, entitled *The Process of Educational Innovation: An International Perspective* which gave valuable information and insights on the chosen innovations not available in the dossiers;
- (c) Certain relevant literature, Reports and Acts of Parliament concerning the countries studied.

The method employed is 'case study' based and is intended to be both qualitative and illuminative. The emphasis is placed on description and analysis of consensus events occurring in the processes of each innovation and not on developing 'findings'.

Certain broad trends, however, did become apparent among many other events which occurred within each innovation. For example:

In all four innovations the people actually involved in carrying out the reform had no part in determining what the reform would be. Those who determined an innovation planned it, and, in two cases legislated for it. The operation of the innovation was left in the hands of those excluded from determining what the solution would be.

Decision making at Government, Ministry and Educator level was greater in frequency than decisions made by groups lower down the societal hierarchy.

These, and many other insights yielded into problems encountered within each innovation, are presented as tentative conjectures on the function of consensus within the innovative process.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Title	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Contents	v
List of Figures	vi
Introduction	viii
Chapter 1	1
Boundaries and Purposes	
Chapter 2	12
The Literature on Innovation	
Chapter 3	19
Nordrhein-Westfalen: The Opportunity to return to School for a Further Year	
Chapter 4	32
New Zealand: A Plan for a School of the Future	
Chapter 5	47
Indonesia: A System of Modular Instruction	
Chapter 6	59
Malaysia: An Improved Curriculum for the First Three Years of Schooling	
Chapter 7	78
Events and Conjectures	
Bibliography	96
Appendix	102
Sample Specimens from the Dossier	

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure</i>		<i>Page</i>
1	The effect of innovation upon socio-educational systems.	4
2	Sample Item from Dossier (Origination Phase, p4).	8
3	Sample Item from Dossier (Origination Phase, p14).	10
4	Nordrhein-Westfalen: The Nature and Extent of Public Concern Shown	26
5	Nordrhein-Westfalen: The Amount of Initiative Taken by Concerned Groups.	28
6	New Zealand: Public Concern of Groups over Secondary Education	34
7	New Zealand: The Initial Flow of Events Towards Producing a New Secondary School Standard Plan (S80)	36
8	New Zealand: Block A. The Whanau House Classroom Block.	38
9	New Zealand: The Whanau House School.	39
10	New Zealand: Consensus/Dissensus Flow Over Decision to Name New School 'Whanau House'.	41
11	New Zealand: Pupil-Teacher-Parent Response to Innovative Situation in Whanau House Unit.	44
12	Indonesia: The Extent of Concern Expressed Publicly in Indonesia When the Problem Was Revealed.	51
13	Indonesia: The Initial Sequence of Events Towards Producing a Modular Instruction System In Indonesia.	53
14	Indonesia: The Extent to Which Attempts Were Made to Keep the Various Groups in Society Informed.	55
15	Indonesia: The Extent to Which Societal Groups in Indonesia are Judged to be Supportive of, or Resistant to Social Change in General.	57
16	Malaysia: Key Data (1977).	62
17	Malaysia: The Events That Occurred In Malaysian Education up to the Origination of the Innovation in the Curriculum Development Centre.	68
18	Malaysia: The Extent of Concern Expressed Publicly In Malaysia When the Problem was Revealed.	71
19	Malaysia: A Composite Figure Showing the Extent to Which Groups in Malaysia were Supportive Of or Resistant To Remedying the Perceived Problem and, These Same Groups Resistance to Change in General.	73

20	The Twenty Questions From the Innovation Dossiers (a) Selected as Indicating Consensus/Concordance/ Dissensus in Decisions Made, and (b) The Key to Dossier Questions Arrayed in Figure 21.	81/82
21	A Cross-Innovation Analysis of Consensus/Dissensus Patterns of Decisions Making During the Origination, Specification and Operational Stages in Each Innovation.	83
22	Actions Taken at Government, Ministry, Educator and Administration Levels During the Four Innova- tions.	88