

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS AT DAWSON COLLEGE

Selby/Viger Psychology Department
Research Committee

Dawson College
Montréal, Québec
August 1984

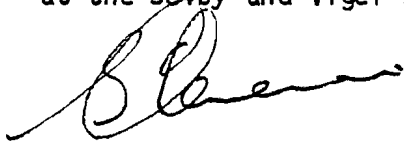
TO: The Dawson Community

FROM: Gary Clemence, Chairman, Selby/Viger Psychology Department

DATE: August 21st, 1984

Last spring all Dawson faculty members were sent a questionnaire by the Selby/Viger Psychology Department Research Committee asking them to evaluate twenty-four administrative decisions, policies, and procedures. The twenty-four items were compiled from lists submitted by randomly selected teachers and administrators in an earlier phase of the study.

I am pleased to send you our findings in the enclosed brief report. Copies of the measures used and statistical analyses are available at the Selby and Viger Psychology Laboratories.



Gary Clemence

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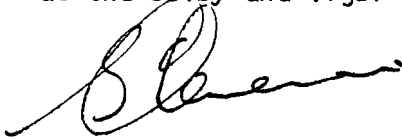
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This study stems from our interest in the relationship between the administration and the faculty of Dawson College. How do teachers perceive administrative decisions, the effects of these decisions, and the process of decision-making itself?

Attitudes and perceptions affect action and interaction. Therefore, it is important to discover faculty views in these areas. If communication with and decision-making by administration are perceived positively by teachers then things are fine and can be seen by all to be fine; if perceptions are negative and problem areas can be identified and analyzed, then remedial action can be taken.

With this in mind, we set out to survey teachers' perceptions of administrative decisions. First, we asked a randomly selected group of teachers, department chairmen, and administrators to draw up lists of recent management decisions which seemed "noteworthy, important, consequential". We then used these decision lists to construct a questionnaire which was sent to all faculty members.

Our aim was to be objective: the cover letters and the questionnaire were neutrally worded, the questionnaire items came not from the research team but from college members chosen at random and the questionnaire was sent to all teachers. In this way, we hoped to collect information that would be reliable, objective, and thus useful.

METHOD

In order to construct a list of administrative decisions, a random sample of 58 (of 631) faculty and 17 (of 34) cadres and gerants was selected from the Dawson College "Faculty Seniority List as of August 13, 1983" and from the list of cadres and gerants (1983-84) provided by the College. People selected in this way were sent a letter requesting that they "write down decisions made by the college management over the last few years which seem noteworthy, important, consequential". Replies were received from 25 people: 23 from faculty (40% of the 58) and 2 from cadres and gerants (12% of the 17).

1. Gary Clemence, Cathy Fichten, Lillian Fox, Alan Moscovitch, Vince Cavaliere, Mical Moser, Martin Pate.

Each administrative decision mentioned by at least two respondents was included in the final questionnaire. There were 24 such items. The final questionnaire includes these in a standard format which allows respondents to evaluate the effect of each decision and the adequacy of consultation:

1. Decision "X"

a. The effect of this

VERY
NEGATIVE

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

VERY
POSITIVE

NO
IMPACT

b. Consultation on this issue

HIGHLY
INADEQUATE

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

HIGHLY
ADEQUATE

DON'T
KNOW

Two questions were added:

Q. 25. What are the three best decisions made by college management over the last few years?

Q. 26. What are the three worst decisions made by college management over the last few years?

On April 6, 1984 the questionnaire and a covering letter were sent to all faculty members at Dawson College. Anonymity was guaranteed if respondents followed the standard mail-balloting procedure specified in the covering letter.

RESULTS

Completed questionnaires were received from 196 teachers (31%). Responses to each question were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Newman-Keuls tests of significance.

To find out whether there were differences among the responses of teachers in different sectors and at different campuses, ANOVA tests were carried out. We also compared the responses of teachers who signed the outside envelope as instructed and those who did not. None of the comparisons revealed any significant differences. In addition, t-tests showed no significant differences between the responses of faculty members teaching at a single campus and those teaching at more than one. Therefore, the data from all 196 questionnaires were used in subsequent analyses.

The results, most easily seen in the Appendix, show the following. Most (20 of the 24, or 83%) decisions listed on the questionnaire were rated as having a negative effect on college life (the mean was 2.67 on a 6-point scale with 1 being very negative and 6 very positive). There were, however, some notable exceptions.

The mean ratings for 4 of the 24 questions (17%) were on the positive side (i.e., >3.5). These were, in rank order:

- Q 19. Placing of microcomputers on all campi (mean = 4.92)
- Q 20. Measures taken to persuade staff to adopt the automatic paycheque system (mean = 4.36)
- Q 10. Acquisition of the Mother House (mean = 4.18)
- Q 17. Cancellation of classes during course change (mean = 3.65)

Of the 20 decisions rated as having a negative effect (i.e., mean \leq 3.5), the 6 most negatively perceived decisions, in rank order, were:

- Q 18. Removal of equipment which previously allowed secretaries to answer faculty telephones (mean = 1.54)
- Q 14. Decision to consider centralization of printing services at Selby (mean = 1.62)
- Q 2. Recent procedures instituted by accounting to assess the use of printshop facilities (mean = 1.77)
- Q 21. How the increased teaching load dictated by the Decree was distributed (e.g., increase in number of sections) (mean = 1.82)
- Q 24. Extent of consultation within the community before decisions are taken by the administration (mean = 1.89)
- Q 15. Appointing, rather than electing, chefs (mean = 1.91)

Overall, consultation on the 24 items was rated as inadequate (mean = 2.13). Indeed, consultation was rated on the inadequate side (i.e., \geq 3.5) on each item.

To assess the relationship between the effect of a decision and the adequacy of consultation, effect and consultation ratings for each question were correlated. The correlation coefficients, for all 24 items, were significant at the .001 level (r values ranged from +.322 to +.886). This indicates that there is a strong relationship between the adequacy of consultation on an issue and its effect.

In response to the two open-ended questions (items 25 and 26), teachers cited 208 different decisions, of which 185 had not appeared as items in the questionnaire. Of these 208, 60% were listed as "worst" decisions, 33% as "best", and 7% got mixed reviews. The average respondent listed 1.1 "best" and 1.8 "worst" decisions. The most frequent number of "best" decisions offered was 0 (by 85 of the 196 respondents), while the most frequent number of "worst" decisions listed was 3 (by 99 of the 196 respondents). The three most frequent "best" decisions were: the acquisition of the Mother House (cited by 53 respondents); the placing of microcomputers on all campi (25); and the automatic paycheque deposit system (22). The three most frequent "worst" decisions were: the increase in teaching load (cited by 29 respondents); the lack of support given to teachers by the Board of Governors during the struggles with the government (25); and the removal of telephone equipment which had allowed secretaries to answer teachers' phones (23).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are reliable, valid, and representative of the attitudes and perceptions of Dawson teachers. The techniques used to gather the data are verifiable and objective. A large number of teachers responded. The respondents were representative of Dawson's sectors and campi. Furthermore, statistical analyses show no significant differences in response with respect to sector or campus. Therefore the results reflect the perceptions of teachers from various

sectors and campi and also reveal that the perceptions of teachers in these different constituencies are strikingly similar.

In general, decisions made by the management of Dawson College were viewed negatively by faculty. The average decision was perceived to have a negative effect, and 20 of 24 decisions received negative ratings. "VERY NEGATIVE" (Box 1) was the most frequent response to 13 decisions. Clearly, teachers are not pleased with the effects of most decisions recently made by administration.

Similarly, teachers are very dissatisfied with the consultation on these decisions. Consultation on all 24 decisions was rated as inadequate. Indeed most people (of those who chose to rate the degree of adequacy) described consultation as "HIGHLY INADEQUATE" (Box 1) on each of the 24 items. This is a striking fact.

A very strong correlation between the perceived effect of a decision and the perceived adequacy of consultation about that decision is demonstrated by the data. In general, the decisions teachers dislike most are the ones about which they feel least consulted.

In several cases, a high number of "NO IMPACT" responses was received. This can perhaps be attributed to actual facts - microcomputers do not affect everyone, switchboard closing hours do not affect those who do not work late, and so on. High "DON'T KNOW" ratings may be due to lack of concern, or not being properly informed (or consulted) and appear to be correlated with "NO IMPACT" responses.

What can be concluded from these findings? Where do they lead us? First, we hope the following principles can be taken for granted: the task of the college, its raison d'être, is the education of its students; the main task of administration is to facilitate education; the teacher is vital to education. Thus, a major task of administration is to support teachers in their efforts to educate students.

A second set of givens: if someone thinks something affects him, it does; perception affects action; morale and working conditions affect performance. Thus, teachers' perceptions affect their teaching.

What do the data show? Teachers say most decisions made by college management have negative effects. Teachers also say they have not been adequately consulted about these decisions. There is a very high degree of correlation between effect and adequacy of consultation.

What should be the response of an enlightened administration to these findings? It should take it for granted that its duties include thorough consultation with teachers before making any decision which may affect teachers. (Also it should not consider consultation with appointed chefs to be the same thing as consultation with teachers.) It should not assume, without consultation, that a decision will not affect teachers. It should view teachers' opinions as desirable and valuable. It should see consultation as productive and essential. It should respect the thoughts of the faculty.

Clearly, faculty must do its part here. It must press for consultation whenever it is lacking and must respond to every invitation to consult.

An administration which does not consult, which pretends to consult, which believes that teachers are not important and that consultation breeds discontent is clearly not going to be helping teachers perform their tasks. An administration which actively seeks and truly values the views of the faculty will arrive at decisions which are more effective and more popular; its actions will result in improved teaching conditions and faculty morale. An administration which works with, not against, faculty will be doing its job of helping to provide a better education for the college's students.

APPENDIX

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS: SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents: Sector Arts 53%, Science 15%, Careers 27%, Other 1%, Two or more sectors 4%
Campus Selby 32%, Viger 23%, Lafontaine 17%, Richelieu 9%, Victoria 5%,
 Delorimier 4%, Other 1%, Two or more campi 10%

The percentages in the columns under the boxes numbered 1 to 6 indicate the % of teachers who circled that number. (This does not include "NO IMPACT" or "DON'T KNOW" responses.) Percentages do not always total 100 because decimals were rounded. Percentages of "NO IMPACT" and "DON'T KNOW" responses are indicated in the relevant columns. Items are ranked in ascending order by mean consultation score.

Consultation on this issue							Item		The effect of this									
DON'T KNOW	HIGHLY INADEQUATE			HIGHLY ADEQUATE			Mean	Rank	Item No.	Mean	VERY NEGATIVE		VERY POSITIVE			NO IMPACT		
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	4	5		6	
16%	80%	13%	4%	1%	1%	1%	1.34	1	18.	Removal of equipment which previously allowed secretaries to answer faculty telephones	1.54	69%	16%	11%	3%	1%	1%	14%
18%	78%	10%	6%	2%	2%	3%	1.50	2	14.	Decision to consider centralization of printing services at Selby	1.62	70%	16%	6%	6%	0%	4%	14%
17%	70%	13%	8%	4%	4%	1%	1.63	3	15.	Appointing, rather than electing, chefs	1.91	57%	17%	14%	6%	4%	2%	10%
11%	66%	17%	10%	4%	2%	1%	1.63	4	2.	Recent procedures instituted by accounting to assess the use of printshop facilities	1.77	57%	23%	12%	4%	3%	2%	10%
11%	66%	18%	6%	4%	4%	2%	1.68	5	21.	How the increased teaching load dictated by the Decree was distributed (e.g. increase in number of sections)	1.82	61%	15%	15%	3%	5%	2%	7%
14%	60%	22%	11%	3%	4%	1%	1.69	6	24.	Extent of consultation within the community before decisions are taken by the administration	1.89	51%	24%	16%	7%	2%	1%	4%
41%	61%	19%	11%	3%	4%	3%	1.79	7	1.	Telephone switchboard closing time	2.62	15%	37%	30%	9%	7%	2%	36%
18%	60%	17%	14%	3%	3%	3%	1.80	8	3.	Requirement that certificates of absence be filled out	2.84	31%	19%	20%	9%	6%	15%	15%
28%	61%	16%	13%	6%	2%	3%	1.81	9	11.	Board of Governors' position on 1983 teachers' strike	2.07	48%	21%	17%	7%	3%	3%	11%
40%	58%	18%	10%	9%	4%	1%	1.87	10	23.	Administrators' attempt to change Senate structure	1.87	50%	22%	19%	8%	1%	0%	25%

Consultation on this issue							Item			The effect of this								
DON'T KNOW	HIGHLY INADEQUATE			HIGHLY ADEQUATE			Mean	Rank	Item No.	Mean	VERY NEGATIVE			VERY POSITIVE			NO IMPACT	
	1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	4	5	6		
23%	58%	17%	9%	11%	3%	1%	1.88	11	4.	Allotment of discretionary staffing quota by administration	2.15	47%	15%	21%	12%	3%	2%	7%
25%	56%	18%	15%	7%	3%	2%	1.89	12	7.	Recent procedures to attempt to comply with copyright regulations	2.32	39%	24%	20%	4%	9%	4%	15%
28%	47%	26%	16%	5%	5%	2%	2.03	13	5.	College policy on contractual times of availability	2.92	18%	22%	28%	20%	7%	5%	15%
31%	47%	23%	15%	7%	7%	2%	2.11	14	6.	Campus closing times	2.88	20%	25%	25%	13%	11%	6%	29%
25%	48%	18%	19%	9%	3%	4%	2.12	15	16.	Monitoring of class cancellations	3.37	22%	14%	16%	19%	13%	16%	17%
38%	45%	18%	21%	8%	5%	4%	2.21	16	22.	Operating hours of audio-visual classroom services	3.08	16%	15%	37%	16%	10%	6%	25%
22%	44%	17%	19%	7%	9%	4%	2.31	17	13.	Participation of administration on departmental hiring committees	2.83	23%	22%	24%	14%	14%	3%	15%
32%	35%	24%	14%	14%	8%	5%	2.50	18	9.	Allotment of capital budget	2.85	20%	19%	35%	15%	8%	4%	13%
40%	37%	16%	20%	16%	8%	4%	2.55	19	12.	Availability of "back-up" (e.g. instruction, software, and supplies) for microcomputers	2.82	21%	25%	20%	18%	13%	2%	34%
24%	40%	15%	13%	12%	8%	12%	2.68	20	17.	Cancellation of classes during course change	3.65	20%	15%	16%	5%	20%	24%	10%
14%	34%	18%	15%	15%	11%	8%	2.76	21	8.	Weight given to departmental needs by scheduler before timetables are finalized	2.94	26%	19%	19%	15%	12%	9%	5%
39%	29%	18%	19%	19%	11%	5%	2.79	22	19.	Placing of microcomputers on all campus	4.92	6%	2%	8%	13%	22%	50%	24%
12%	23%	18%	16%	19%	12%	13%	3.17	23	10.	Acquisition of the Mother House	4.18	13%	8%	13%	14%	17%	35%	7%
19%	24%	11%	16%	14%	12%	23%	3.48	24	20.	Measures taken to persuade staff to adopt the automatic paycheque deposit system	4.36	9%	8%	15%	13%	18%	38%	9%