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An Investigation of the Perceptions of Elementary and Middle School Teachers
Regarding Their Participation in Distributed Leadership and Decision Making

by

Virginia Meadows McNeil

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Leadership and Policy Studies

The University of Memphis

December, 2014

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Frank McNeil, Sr. and to my wonderful children, Franklin McNeil, Jr., Kimmie McNeil Vaulx and MeKeeba McNeil Lomax. Also, to my beautiful and talented grandchildren Glenn Miller Vaulx , III, Kamryn Vaulx, MiKayla Lomax, Malia Lomax, Morgan Lomax and last, but not least, my loving son-in-laws Robert Lomax, Jr. and Glenn Miller Vaulx, Jr..

Working with the many superintendents, principals, and parents, inspired me to investigate the possibilities of school leadership and school improvement. My special dedication goes to my very first principal role at Alton Elementary and to the students, faculty and parents who believed in my leadership and who were willing participants in the pursuit of school reform.

In loving memory of my parents, guardians, grandparents and in-laws

Acknowledgements

I give honor to God for his matchless grace toward the accomplishment of this task. The comfort of prayer and God's assurance helped me through the many distracting occurrences in my life as an education leadership servant. I thank him that he made it possible to fulfill my dream. My appreciation goes to my committee chair, Dr. Larry McNeal for encouraging and believing in me. A special thanks goes to Dr. Louis Franceschini, III for his assistance, and grateful appreciation goes to the members of my dissertation committee.

To my encouragers, my pastor, Dr. Reginald Porter, Sr., my church members, my co-workers, the principals, teachers, secretaries and custodians, personal friends, and neighbors, I say thanks!

I offer special thanks to my husband, Franklin McNeil, Sr. for his tolerance, to my daughters, Kimmie and MeKeeba for the many times I was engaged in the preparation of this document and to my grandchildren, Glenn, III, Kamryn, Mikayla, Malia, and Morgan for whom I wish great possibilities for leadership. Thank you all, I could not have endured without you!

Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which elementary and middle school teachers perceived they were being treated as leaders at their schools and were being provided with a substantial role in making school decisions. With respect to their perceived leadership status, elementary and middle school teachers differed only in their assessment of the effectiveness of teacher leadership at their institutions, with elementary teachers offering statistically significant but only slightly more positive ratings than their middle-level counterparts ($\chi^2(1) = 6.30, p = .012, \phi = -0.04$). In examining the perceptions of subgroups of elementary and middle school teachers, teachers' years of experience and their tenure at the school were both observed to mediate their responses to particular teacher leadership items but the effects were small and not directionally consistent. Much more frequent, however, were statistically significant differences in the size of the role that elementary and middle school teachers perceived they played in school decision making. While more middle-level than elementary level teachers held that their role was moderate to large in decisions involving devising teaching techniques ($\chi^2(1) = 7.81, p = .005, \phi = 0.05$) and setting grading and student assessment practices ($\chi^2(1) = 16.90, p < .001, \phi = 0.07$), more elementary than middle school teachers claimed a substantial level of influence with respect to such matters as the content of professional development ($\chi^2(1) = 6.17, p = .013, \phi = -0.04$), student discipline procedures ($\chi^2(1) = 9.36, p = .002, \phi = -0.05$), the selection of teachers new to this school ($\chi^2(1) = 6.80, p = .009, \phi = -0.05$), and school improvement planning ($\chi^2(1) = 14.83, p < .001, \phi = -0.07$).

Analyses of these decision making issues, by subgroups of teachers, indicated that, at both levels of schooling, more years of experience and longer tenure at a school tended to interact with the level of schooling and to expand the teacher's perceived role.

Consistently evidencing the most robust effects by experience and tenure was teachers' perceived level of involvement in school improvement planning.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) which is one of the central federal laws in pre-collegiate education (Bork & Kneedy, 2003). At the core of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), are a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). This accountability for results has fallen mainly to principals and teachers. This represents a significant change to the education landscape and has required that principals and teachers expand their roles beyond traditional bureaucratic and administrative roles (Stevenson & Stigler, 2006). In fact, researchers (Lambert, 2005; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004) agree, that leadership that is shared among principals and teachers is increasingly being recognized as a core feature of successful school improvement initiatives. Along with the increased focus on student achievement has come greater scrutiny on school change and reform efforts (Cuban, 2008). As a result, numerous initiatives have attempted to reform and restructure the nation's schools and school governance by revising leadership roles and responsibilities (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). However, there has not been one true model that has met this need effectively (Fullan, 1993).

Several leadership models have been considered over the past few decades. Most school leadership models have evolved from a top down administration model to models similar to a site-based school leadership model comprised of lead teachers. The site-based school leadership model emphasized a team approach composed of administrators,

teachers, parents, and outside stakeholders in decision-making that could possibly yield increases in student achievement (Barth, 1991). Advocates, such as the Carnegie Foundation Forum on Education and Reform, began urging that principals share leadership with teachers as early as 1986 (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The Foundation argued that committees comprised of lead teachers would be a more efficient way to operate schools. Fullan (1993) concurred and indicated that the notion of the autonomous principal was inflated and could be flattened with the assistance of teacher leaders. Whereas, Liberman (1995) viewed the new path of leadership as one where the principal acted as partner with the teachers, not to control, but to collaborate; other researchers (Lambert, 2002; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) went so far as to posit that the principal, as sole leader, was no longer an effective model of school governance. This consensus coupled with society's perception that structural change for school was needed (Goodlad, 1993) reinforced this researcher's belief that a broader base of shared leadership is needed with teacher leaders primed and ready to have an active role in the school's organizational functions.

Background of the Study

The literature is replete in establishing the notion that the role of the principal has evolved to one with a greater emphasis on being instructional leader; however, the challenges of performing the tasks specified for instructional leaders is so cumbersome that it is questionable as to whether an individual can complete those tasks (Green, 2012). Principals are expected to assume responsibility for an expanding list of areas such as creating a vision and fostering a climate hospitable to academic success; cultivating leadership; improving academic instruction; and the day-to-day management of people,

data, and processes (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). It is arguable whether any one individual could successfully juggle this complex listing of tasks. Consequently, the advocates of the current reform movement postulate that leadership should be distributed throughout the organization and that teachers should be participating in the decision making process (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Pugalee, Frykholm, and Shaka (2001) purported that teachers who take an active role in leadership can have a profound impact upon the change that is needed to sustain a higher quality of education. Also, teacher leadership has long been recognized as playing a significant part in increasing student achievement (Suranna & Moss, 2002). In fact, leadership that is shared among principals and teachers is increasingly recognized as a core feature of successful school reform and improvement initiatives (Lambert, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Teachers and their role as teacher leaders is greatly debated in the literature. Carlson (1987), asserts that the relationship between policy makers and practitioners have often been hierarchical, unidirectional and even adversarial, with policymakers telling teachers what to do and how to do it. While Graham (2003) wrote that the role that teachers should play in effective educational efforts is not well defined, other researchers have claimed that teachers are unprepared for the complex demands of their work and unsupported when they are asked to implement instructional reforms (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988). Harris (2005) associates teacher leadership with the creation of collegial norms, a contributing factor to school effectiveness and school improvement. Although there are studies about teacher leadership, teachers' own perceptions of teacher leadership, in the context of school decision-making remains lacking in the literature (Angelle & Schmidt, 2007). This study is an attempt to fill the gap in the literature

through investigating the perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers regarding their participation in shared leadership and decision making.

Central to any discussion of teacher perceptions and school reform is a set of factors describing the collegiality of the workplace that, broadly defined, includes the relationship between school leaders and teachers and interactions among teachers (Lambert, 2003). Much of the literature suggests that schools will be more attractive to teachers when they are organized for productive collegial work under a principal's effective leadership (Johnson, 2005). Although there is little research documenting the empirical relationship between such an environment and teacher retention the elements most frequently discussed include the quality of school leadership, collaboration among teachers, and teacher empowerment (Johnson, 2006). The increased focus on teacher empowerment and leadership stems from the literature on transformational leadership and teacher leadership which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Expanding on the concept of teacher empowerment is the notion of participation in decision making. Barth (2001) argues that contributing to decision-making and actively voicing opinions and ideas is often considered to be a form of restructuring and a source of empowerment for teachers. Furthermore, these ideas lead towards more effective practices which may yield enhanced student learning (Harris & Jones, 2010). There are current calls for the empowerment of teachers in order to create a renewal of commitment in the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2008). Teacher empowerment often accompanies policies to increase decision making authority and accountability at the school level (Sirianni, 1987). The term, teacher empowerment has affinities with other participatory workplace movements that have arisen such as

industrial democracy, worker control, quality of work life, and job redesign (Brown, 1993). While advanced participation in decision making, such as peer evaluation, worker selection of administrators and supervisors, and workers as strategic planners rarely occurs in the workplace, teacher participation in school decision making has traditionally assisted administrators in their coordinating role and in building commitment among their faculties (Conley, 1991; Marks, 1995).

In 1986, the Carnegie Commission called for giving teachers a greater voice in decisions that affect the school (p. 57). However, a second Carnegie Foundation report based on a national survey of public school teachers found that a majority of teachers are not asked to participate in such crucial matters as teacher evaluation, staff development, and budget (Carnegie Foundation, 1988). The research literature on teacher participation in decision making seems overshadowed with other issues because discussions of teacher involvement is often restricted to a narrow range of instructional policy-making areas, such as shaping the curriculum (Conley, Schmidle, & Shedd, 1988). The nation's largest teacher's union and administrator organization jointly produced a report calling for teacher participation in "identifying the purposes, priorities and goals of the school" (National Education Association/National Association for Secondary School Principals, 1986, p. 6). Similarly, Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1995) posit in their research that in order for school capacity for organizational learning to be strong, teachers need to participate in and influence school decision-making. As such, participation in decision-making has been examined as a key determinant of such school outcomes as teacher job satisfaction, stress, militancy, role conflict, collaboration, leadership and work alienation (Benson & Malone, 1987).

The literature is generally consistent in describing teacher decision making as having been adopted to serve bureaucratic or human relations ends before being proposed as a policy initiative central to school reform (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). The researchers are in agreement that teacher participation in decision making rarely focused on the core functions of school, which was teaching and learning (Sykes, 1990). Supporters of teacher empowerment argue that teachers should have greater participation in curriculum development, staffing decisions and budget allocation (Lange, 1993; Moore, 1996, & White, 1992). All of which enables teachers to be empowered to make decision that affect the effectiveness of the school program. A study by Weiss (1993) reported that involving teachers in decision making enhanced participating teachers' commitment to implementing school improvements. Even more, research on change in schools points to participation in decision making as a key variable in developing motivation and commitment among staff members (Moore, 1996). As with most recent initiatives to redesign teachers' work, the adoption of program and policy initiatives to increase teacher participation in decision making has far outpaced development of knowledge about the subject (Conley, 1991). However, it's possible that the studies already completed on PLCs and the research surrounding cultivating learning communities and a culture of sharing can contribute to this dialogue.

Statement of the Problem

In the current era of education reform, school leaders are experiencing increased pressure to improve academic performance and increased accountability. For the most part, this burden rests mainly on the position of school principal. As highlighted above, research is reinforcing the notion that bureaucratic models of authority are becoming less

effective at managing the ever-increasing mandates that school principals are expected to oversee. As such new models of school governance are surfacing. Of particular importance in this study is rise in the Teacher leadership model. This model is sometimes referred to as participative decision making which promotes effective professional learning communities. This researcher's posits that to be successful in addressing the new reforms and pressures to meet new standards, school systems and leaders need to tap into the most abundant resource available—teachers. However, the challenge is to identify key perceptions, especially those perceptions that influence the sharing of leadership responsibilities and those perceptions which answer questions focused on the presence of critical teaching conditions across key constructs (DuFour, 2005). This is an examination of elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership, school leadership, and decision making via a secondary data set from the *Measures of Effective Teaching (MET)/Working Conditions Survey (MET)*.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of their leadership and participation in decision making within their schools and the extent to which they are being treated as teacher leaders. The intent of this study was to reveal the leadership processes that occur in elementary and middle schools, particularly as it relates to the distribution of leadership and how it impacts those who work directly with the students.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

elementary and middle school teachers perceive themselves as taking on leadership

1. To what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive they are being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?
2. To what extent do the perceptions of teachers at the elementary school level differ from the teachers at the middle school level regarding being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?
3. To what extent within the elementary and middle school teacher's levels are these perceptions moderated by elementary and middle school teachers' years of experience and by their years of experience at their schools?
4. Across the eight areas of educational decision making, to what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive themselves as taking on leadership roles at their schools?
5. To what extent do the elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions differ regarding their leadership roles?
6. To what extent are these perceptions of leadership roles moderated by elementary and middle school teachers according to their years of experience and their years of experience at their schools?

Significance of the Study

This study will add to the body of research by adding the teachers' perceptions of the application of distributed leadership and decision making in schools and how it impacts those who work directly with students. The research of Mayrowetz (2008) suggested that the greatest potential of distributed leadership and decision making was in the potential to build human capacity within schools. Recent school reform efforts for kindergarten through 12 education and the need to involve all parties in school improvement have launched human capital initiatives by influential stakeholders aimed at developing public schools. In the light of the resource, social, political and design realities facing our schools and their leaders, principals will need guidance on how to share leadership that has traditionally been assigned to the principal. Despite the interest from practitioners, grant-makers, and policymakers, there has been little research regarding how principals attempt to raise teacher quality through involvement at their school site (Leithwood et al, 2008). This study may also be significant because it supports the research on the importance of the principal as the instructional leader and a cultivator of teacher leaders. Barth (2001) argued that schools should be a community of learners with principals leading teacher development and teachers leading student development thus resulting in increased student performance. This study examined the leadership practices grounded in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) as defined by (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, (2004).

There is growing evidence that of all school resources, teachers have the largest impact on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2008). Principals arguably play the most important role in ensuring that excellent teaching occurs in their schools (Johnson,

2006). How principals hire teachers, assign them to specific positions, evaluate them, and provide growth opportunities for them, likely have major ramifications regarding teacher quality and teacher perceptions (Barth, 2001). Next, this study may be significant because it identifies how teachers perceive they are being treated as leaders and the areas in which they are making educational decisions. Lastly, this study will add to the literature on the development of teacher leaders as a critical component for sustainable learning organizations.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the following:

1. The results are limited to the study of one school district.
2. The results are limited to one part of the survey.
3. This study seeks to identify select distributed leadership variables and to examine their relevance to teacher perceptions.
4. The study is limited to responses from a survey on working conditions in a large southeastern, metropolitan district, using secondary analysis of already existing data.
5. The findings in the study came only from those who participated in the study.
6. The study is limited to quantitative analysis because no qualitative data was gathered by the instrument.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of the study are as follows:

1. Only grades K-8 are considered in this study.

2. The data collected is confined to teachers and principals within a mid-south urban district.
3. The data collected is specifically on teacher leadership and decision making.
4. The research findings are for elementary and middle school teachers only
5. The study is delimited to elementary and middle school teacher's perceptions of how they are being treated as teacher leaders in their schools and to what extent they are involved in the eight areas of decision making.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study is grounded in Distributed Leadership as defined by James (Spillane et al., 2001). Researchers such as Base (1985) and Green (2012) have posited that the school leader's behavior, beliefs, and social interaction will aid in the progression of school improvement. However, Spillane and his colleagues, focus their attention on the concept of distributed leadership (Spillane & Scherer, 2004; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2003). The rationale for using this theory is that, it focuses on the decentralization of the leader and advances the idea that others can have an active role in leading. Rather than defining distributed leadership as the distribution of tasks, Spillane et al. (2003) characterize it as an interplay between leaders, followers, and specific situations. The roles of leaders and followers may periodically change as the situation warrants (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). Critical to their concept of distributed leadership, are three ways that leadership functions can be distributed over multiple leaders: 1) collaborative distribution occurs when the actions of one leader become the basis for the actions of another leader; 2) collective distribution occurs when leaders act separately and independently, but for a shared goal; and 3) coordinated

distributions occurs when sequential tasks are led by different individuals (Marzano et al., 2005).

Distributed Leadership Defined

DuFour (2005) describes distributed leadership as the most effective way to create leadership throughout the school and as a way to promote effective professional learning communities. Also contributing to the concept, Gold (2004) asserted that the practice of distributed leadership links teacher leadership with a school's capacity for change and development. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) maintain that distributed leadership is a sustainable form of leadership practice since it highlights emerging leadership talent and validates the achievements of a group, not just an individual. Distributed leadership is receiving great attention and increased support in recent educational discourse (Spillane, 2006). Although distributed leadership provides a theoretical-grounded framework to examine leadership practice, the concept is relatively new, lacks a widely-accepted definition, and has a limited empirical research base (Spillane, 2006 & Timperly, 2005). However, the relationship established between teacher leaders and their principals is identified as strong evidence on teacher leadership (Crowther, Kagen, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002). Moreover, the pivotal role of the principal in facilitating and cultivating professional learning communities is emphasized in the literature (Barth, 2001; Childs-Bowen, 2000; Conzemius, 1999; Crowther et al., 2002 & Terry, 1999). Other researchers, (Smylie & Hart, 2000), offer a strong theoretical orientation for the role of principals in developing teacher leaders.

Strong endorsement of teacher professionalization also continues as evidenced in recommendations made by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

(1996) which focused on encouraging and rewarding career-long development. That endorsement continued with the Council of Chief State Officers (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996) in their standards for school leaders which supported a collaborative approach to school leadership. Spillane (2006) introduced the concept of distributed leadership which is aligned with the assertions of Ogawa and Bossert (1995). In distributed leadership, they posit, that school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice stretched over the school's social and situational contexts. Furthermore, they explain, the interdependence of the individual and the environment shows how human activity as distributed in the interactive web of actors, artifacts, and the situation, is the appropriate unit of analysis for studying practice. Employing the school as the unit of analysis, Spillane and his colleagues have developed a research agenda to investigate why and how leadership stretches across people in schools to affect the conditions for teaching and learning (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Recently, the concept of distributed leadership has been mentioned in school leadership literature. Unlike the study of leadership, focusing on the individual, distributed leadership examines the construct as an emergent property of interacting individuals (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003). Distributed leadership is described as the sharing the spreading, and the distribution of leadership work across individuals and roles across the school organization (Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Seashore-Louis, 2007). Discussions of community building, the complexity of leadership as a construct, the need to share leadership in times of accountability and the connection of distributed leadership to school improvement have increased interest about this concept (Doyle & Doyle, 2000; Halverson, 2006; Harris, 2005; Hartley, 2007 & Wright, 2008).

The literature touts the value of teachers as leaders and for that reason, this study intends to discover if elementary and middle school teachers surveyed in this study feel that they are being treated as leaders by their participation in decision making.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study to establish a general understanding of the major concepts driving this research.

1. Decision Making: A systematic process of choosing from several alternatives to achieve a desired result (Kamlesh & Solow, 1994).
2. Distributed Leadership: The sharing, the spreading and the broadening the base of leadership across individuals and roles through the school organization (Smilie et al., 2007; & Spillane & Scherer, 2004).
3. Instructional Leadership: The art of coaching, influencing and assisting followers in fulfilling individual, as well as, organizational goals (Harris, 2005).
4. Leadership: The identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination and use of the social, material and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).
5. Perceptions: The way we judge or evaluate others; the process by which people attach meaning to experiences (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001).
6. Shared Leadership: The limits and potential of a leader's position, a balanced use of positional authority, with reliance on others, gradually building both a capacity and widespread support (Burns, 1978).
7. Teacher Leadership: The process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals or other members of school committees to

improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement (Johnson, 2006).

8. Working Conditions: The physical features of the work place, the organization structure and the sociological, political, psychological, and educational features of the work environment (Johnson, 2006).

Organization of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters and is organized in a way to provide the reader with a firm understanding of distributed leadership theory and shared decision-making as a future model for school governance and leadership. Chapter 1 begins with the introduction and background to the study, problem statement, statement of purpose, questions guiding the research statement of significance. It also includes the limitations and delimitations of the research, definition of terms, and the theoretical framework of distributed leadership for this study. Next, Chapter 2 clarifies the concept of distributed leadership and reviews the literature related to professional learning communities and their relevance to teachers' perceptions regarding principal leadership and their involvement in decision making. Chapter 2 also offers descriptions of situational leadership and discusses organizational structure, decision making involvement of the principal and teacher and new expectations for teacher leadership. Then, Chapter 3 outlines the methodology for analyzing the data and describes the instrument used to collect the data. Following, in Chapter 4 is the presentation and analysis of the data collected and the responses to the research questions. Chapter 5 concludes the study with the summary of results, recommendations related to the study, and discussions of findings, implications, and future research and practice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 2 presents a review of related literature regarding teacher empowerment, distributed leadership as transformational leadership, principal leadership, and teacher leadership. The researcher examined the literature regarding the conceptual framework of distributed leadership and its role in and impact on school, principal, and teacher leadership. Considerable attention is directed towards the literature regarding Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in an attempt to create a comprehensive picture of the need for distributed leadership between the principal and the teachers. These components provide the reader with a broad understanding of the evolution of the concepts and will lay the foundation for answering the research questions. In the urban district where the researcher just completed service as a regional director, there were continued discussions on teacher effectiveness and teacher leadership. The introduction of turnaround policies and requirements for failing schools directed attention to the teacher without furnishing the conditions for teacher involvement in higher levels of decision making. The research is not clear on how teachers feel about becoming involved in decision making. As such, this chapter examines the components and concepts that may have contributed to this change and what conditions may be needed to empower teachers and affect student learning. Much of the framework for this literature review is grounded in the literature of teacher empowerment, teacher leadership, professional learning communities, and the practice of distributed leadership.

Teacher Empowerment

Starting in the early 1990s, researchers shifted their attention to transformational leadership and in particular, the ability of leaders to build organizational capacity for change and innovation (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1993). Included under this rubric are terms such as teacher empowerment and shared or distributed leadership (Spillane et al., 2001). Within those models, principals operate through helping the school community itself to develop a shared vision and a commitment to that vision. In this approach, leaders do not merely impose goals on teachers; instead, they work through and with teachers to establish the conditions to help them to be effective.

Along with the research, the focus on transformational leadership led to more attention on teacher empowerment. Transformational leadership, according to one definition, is a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and resolve their own problems (Bogler & Somech, 2004). The first thing that must happen for school transformation to occur is that the top level leader must become convinced that transformation is necessary and that he or she is prepared to undertake leading such an effort (Schlechty, 2009). Schlechty (2009) continues with the postulation that unlike more modest improvement efforts, in which leadership can be delegated, transformation requires the sustained, dedicated attention of the top leader as a leader of leaders. Schlechty further believes that empowered teachers allow principals to become transformational leaders. Among the ideas of teacher empowerment are teachers' participation in decision making in areas that affect their work, perceptions that they have opportunities for learning and professional growth, and a feeling of mastery in both knowledge and practice. Shared decision making has also

been found as a key component to teacher empowerment (Rice & Schneider, 1994; Rinehart, Short, Short, & Eckley, 1998). In studies reviewed by Firestone and Pennell, (1993), teachers' autonomy in making classroom decisions and participating in school-wide decision making both emerged as predictive of commitment to their schools and of the likelihood of staying in them. Ingersoll, one of the most extensive examiners of working conditions data, found that leadership, empowerment and time have connections to teachers' dissatisfaction, especially in urban schools. In a national survey of teachers regarding reasons for teacher dissatisfaction, Ingersoll (2001) found that poor administrative support and lack of faculty influence were the leading factors for dissatisfaction in high-poverty urban schools. Further, Marzano (2003), in his research, posits that teachers who felt empowered to make decisions about their classroom and school work have positive views of their school leader. The correlations suggest that improving leadership would have a ripple effect on other working conditions causing teachers' overall satisfaction with their school climate to increase and thereby improving student learning (Hirsch et al., 2003).

The research suggests that transformational leaders distribute leadership among others in the schools (Spillane, 2005). For example, Kormaz (2007), studied the effects of leadership style on the organizational health of schools in Turkey. He cited studies that relate the dissatisfaction of teachers to low salaries, lack of resources, inappropriate administrative leadership styles and job-related stress. However, Kormaz (2007) also found that the principal's leadership style transforms the school's learning climate, the level of relationship between staff and the teacher morale. Gonzales and Short (1996) found that the more empowered teachers felt the more they pointed to the importance of

the leader. Given this interconnectedness between empowered teachers and their leaders, the next section explores the relationship between distributed leadership and transformational leadership more in-depth.

Distributed Leadership as Transformational Leadership

A search of the literature reveals that the term “distributed leadership” is believed to have been used for the first time by Gibb (1954), an Australian psychologist, who drew attention to the dynamics of influence processes as they impact the work of different groups. As an early scholar, Gibb (1954) posited that “leadership is best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group” (p. 884). The Distributive Leadership Theory, as defined by (Spillane et al., 2001), expanded leadership beyond one individual to a practice that includes multiple leaders within a school. (Spillane et al., 2006) presents a compelling view of leadership as a shared, social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by leaders and followers over other people to structure activities and relationships in group or organization. Starrat (1999) describes distributed leadership as non-hierarchical and inclusive; a leadership approach that fosters collaborative and ethical practice, both important aspects of school restructuring and improvement. Drawing on the effective schools literature, much of the early research on school leadership highlighted the role of instructional leadership (Elmore, 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 1998) and the ability of the principal to develop a clear school mission.

Similarly in Transformational Leadership Theory, Bass (1985) combined the behaviors of leaders and followers and recognized that the dependencies between the two is what allowed for achievement of common purposes or to advance to higher levels

within an organization. Burns (1978) discussed the concept of transforming leadership, which entails leaders recognizing the needs, demands, and talents of potential followers. He recommended that leaders examine the motives in followers, while seeking to satisfy higher needs and engaging the full person. Thus, resulting in a relationship of shared benefit and allows for followers to transition into leaders (Burns, 1978). In this model, the leader transforms and motivates through employing transformational leadership practices (Marzano et al., 2005). Transformational leaders respond to followers' needs by empowering them to develop as leaders while aligning the goals and objectives of the individual, the leader, and the organization. While Bass (2006) and others acknowledge that transformational leaders inspire followers to commit to a shared vision and drive school improvement and transformation, Spillane's theory of distributed leadership allows the lens to focus more on followership and followers as leaders.

Spillane and his colleagues (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2011; Spillane, Hallet, & Diamond, 2003) offer a model of distributed leadership that is focused on leading the technical core of school. They reasoned that principals cannot succeed alone and that multiple formal and informal leaders are needed to guide schools. Spillane et al. (2001) refer to leadership as distributed practice. In this context, distributed leadership is thought of as a shared practice by individuals seeking to address organizational issues and problems, such as, when teachers collaborate in an attempt to take action regarding specific problems. The distributed view of leadership is responsible for a shift of focus in that the emphasis is no longer on individuals such as school principals as leaders, but on a web of actors and their circumstances (Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Distinctions of Distributed Leadership

Researchers argue that delegation of tasks or dividing responsibilities according to role is not distributed leadership (Timperly, 2005; Watson & Scribner, 2007). In a case study on distributed leadership, Watson and Scribner (2007) found that the schools that purport to practice distributed leadership actually delegate responsibilities without passing on the accompanying authority traditionally invested in those who perform such duties. To truly be distributive, the tasks of leadership are performed through the interaction of multiple individual leaders (Halverson, 2006). Equally important are the contexts where these interactions occur (Harris, 2005). This type of leadership is referred to as leadership sharing, which involves spreading and distributing leadership tasks across multiple actors across multiple roles and multiple levels of school organization (Angelle & Schmidt 2007).

As introduced in Chapter 1 there are three types of leadership distribution: 1) collaborative distribution, 2) collective distribution, and 3) coordinated distribution (Spillane et al., 2003). Collaborated distribution requires two or more leaders to work together in the same place and time to execute the same leadership routine (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; York-Barr & Duke 2004). Whereas, collective distribution involves two or more leaders who enact a leadership routine by acting separately, but independently, coordinated distribution refers to leadership routines that incorporate activities that have to be performed in a particular sequence (Spillane, 2008). Consistent with the research which suggests that school leadership goes beyond those in formal leadership positions, Spillane, et al., (2001) argues “that leadership activity is constituted in the interaction of multiple leaders and followers using particular tools and artifacts around particular

leadership tasks while including the “critical interdependencies among the constituting elements –leaders, followers, and situation – of leadership activity” (p. 16). The researchers suggest that it is these interdependencies that involve individuals playing off one another with the action of one directly enabling the actions of the other, so that the interacting practices add up to more than the actions of the individual leaders (Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995; Spillane, 2008).

Merits of Distributed Leadership

The literature identifies an increasing demand for and importance placed on school improvement and the implementation of innovative school reforms (Lambert, 2002). Spillane, (2006) disputes current bureaucratic leadership theories emphasizing specialized roles, behavioral traits, and unilateral functions. The researcher presents a view of leadership as a shared, social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by leaders and followers over other people to structure activities and relationships in a group or organization. The literature supports the work of Elmore (2000) and the premise that distributed leadership is based upon the idea that people can lead when and where they have the expertise. Spillane (2004) goes further to advance the case that “leadership is not simply a function of what a school principal knows and does but rather it is activities engaged in by leaders, in interaction with others around specific tasks” (p. 5). Moreover, leaders are dependent on followers and followers are equally crucial in creating practice and understanding leadership dynamics (Burns, 1978; Smylie & Hart, 1999).

Spillane’s (2006) leader-plus aspect reveals that it is the interactions of people or the reciprocal interdependency between their actions, not solely the actions and expertise

of heroic principals that construct leadership practice. Building upon his ideas of organizational theory, Spillane identifies collaborated, collective, and coordinated forms of distribution and urges the reader to look beyond who takes responsibility for particular functions and routines and points out how leadership practice exists in the intersection of leaders, followers and their situations (Spillane & Scherer, 2004). Different school leaders can emerge and take on leadership functions as dictated by the situation and their own interests and expertise, thus, “the new leader professionalism is collaborative, not autonomous; open rather than closed; outward-looking rather than insular; and authoritative but not controlling” (Fulan, 2007, p.297). When the beliefs and contributions of teachers are considered important, teachers are more likely to support school goals (Timperly, 2005). While researchers posit that performance is negatively impacted when people feel alienated and powerless, the opposite also holds true. The ability to empower others leverages the commitments and capacities of organizational members (Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

Imperative of Principal Leadership

If principals are going to be accountable for the expanding demands of principalship in the 21st century then it is imperative for them to embrace leadership practices that engages teacher as leaders. The researchers, Glassman and Heck (1992), acknowledge the belief that principals have an impact on schools while concurring that before the 1980s, few empirical studies explored the effects of school leadership. However, an increasing concern for educational accountability during the 1980s brought greater urgency to documenting whether and how principals make a difference in schooling (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Likewise, Bridges (1992) concluded that principal

leadership does have indirect effects on student outcomes in a variety of in-school processes. At the same time, Wagner (1993), illustrated in his research, the preoccupation of fellow researchers to document that principals make a difference and the notion that school leadership is synonymous with the principal. In the end, Wagner concludes that scholars have largely ignored other sources of leadership within the school such as assistant principals and senior teacher leaders. Even more, Wagner (1993) posits that immersion in effectiveness studies reveal the need to examine the role of school leaders through more diverse lenses and methods.

Other researchers offer the potential for addressing blind spots in our picture of school leadership (Everhart, 1988; Kaplan, 1964; & Lather, 1991). The potentials include sense-making, or the social construction of leadership; distributed leadership; micro politics of leadership within the school; leadership as influenced by cultural norms of the society; and gender and ethnicity in leadership roles. Even so, principals do not abdicate their responsibilities to be a leader to the school's teacher leaders. The literature shows abundant information that the principal assumes a new role, from instructional leader to developer of a community of leaders (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The literature on teacher leadership cites the relationship between the teacher leader and the principal as one of the significant factors influencing the success of the teacher leader as stated by York-Barr and Duke (2004) who posit in their studies that principals and teacher leaders have parallel, complementary leadership responsibilities for leading improvement in teaching and learning. Some researchers have argued that the effectiveness of principals have been undermined by the lack of data to study principals, their complex work, and their impact on school outcomes (Branch, Hanuschek, & Rivkin, 2009). Recent work by

the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) researchers has advanced the knowledge base on school leadership and specifically principal effectiveness, by drawing on longitudinal state data to estimate the effects of principals for different kinds of schools and students. This work sheds some light on important issues related to school leadership and principal effectiveness (Hornig, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2009). The identified issues include:

- 1) Evidence that the quality of a principal affects a range of school outcomes such as teacher satisfaction, parental perception of school quality, and school academic achievements.
- 2) Evidence demonstrating that the school principal's job is complex and multifaceted, and the importance of daily execution of tasks and time management.
- 3) Evidence demonstrating the most highly-skilled and effective principals rarely are found in the schools that need them most such as high-poverty, low-achieving schools.

A study of teachers' perceptions of their working conditions in North Carolina demonstrates that working conditions are highly predictive of teachers' stated intentions to remain in or leave their schools (Ladd, 2009). Of the five domains of working conditions identified—leadership, facilities, empowerment, professional development, and time policies—leadership emerges as the most salient dimension affecting teachers' plans to stay in or leave their schools (King, 2010). In a study published in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, the researcher, posits that the more effective principals were those who defined their roles as facilitators of teacher success rather than instructional leaders

(Leana, 2011). In this case, the principals provided teachers with the resources they needed to build social capital—time, space, and staffing—to make the informal and formal connections possible.

Several recent meta-analyses conclude that principal leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors contributing to student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Murphy & Datnow, 2003; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The researchers also posit that the positive impact of leadership is even greater in low-performing schools (Leithwood et al., 2004; Branch et al., 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). In addition, principals' work has been shown to impact school performance, teacher quality, and policy implementation. These leadership functions can also influence student learning, although indirectly (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Some studies of schools and teachers indicate that principals:

- Are a determining factor in teachers' decisions to join and remain in a school (Boyd et al., 2010);
- Set and maintain school reform agendas (Gamoran, Anderson, Quirioz, Secada, Williams, & Ashman, 2003);
- Build organizational culture and trust in school buildings (Bryk, Schneider, Gsreenberg, & Kochanek, 2002);
- Affect schools' abilities to administer programs and influence change through the allocation of human, financial, and other resources (Leithwood & Montgomery, 2005);
- Help interpret district and state policies, thereby influencing if and how policies are enacted (Halverson & Clifford, 2006).

As mentioned above, principals need to employ leadership models that encourage and inspire teachers to become leaders and work collaboratively towards the shared vision. Although the behavior and personality traits of the principal as leader are important, Collins (2001) found a negative correlation between charismatic leadership and sustained greatness in the organizations he studied. The most effective leaders focused on building the capacity of their organizations to improve continuously, on developing the next generations of leaders, and on ensuring the organization would continue to thrive long after they were gone (Collins, 2001). Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) arrived at a similar conclusion, asserting that leaders have the most positive impact when they focus on developing systems, teams, and cultures to ensure the ongoing success of the organization. They continue by positing that these leaders viewed their jobs as establishing the conditions for others to succeed. These conclusions support the assertion that the principal's role in advancing teacher leadership and school improvement remains critical.

Teacher Leadership

Lambert (2003) asserts that capacity-building principals align their actions to the belief that everyone has the right, responsibility, and capability to work as a leader. The researcher further states that such a perspective requires that principals be clear about their own core values and confident in their own capacity to work well with others by influencing, facilitating, guiding, and mentoring rather than using authority to tell and command. In his synthesis of research on teacher leadership, Murphy (2005) suggests that the benefits of teacher leadership are potentially far reaching to individual teachers, to other teachers, to the teaching profession, to schools and to students. Murphy continues

with the finding that teacher leadership influences teacher's sense of professionalism including their empowerment, commitment, and view of their work as a profession rather than a job. Murphy further states that teacher leadership influences the school's culture including the degree to which teachers engage in collegial professional learning and have a strong sense of internal accountability. Both of these factors, posits Murphy (2005), influence school improvement and student learning.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) cite a lack of common understanding of teacher leadership. They define teacher leadership "as teachers who are leaders within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p.11). The concept of teacher leadership suggest that teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the ways schools operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning (Smylie & Denny, 1990). The researchers further conclude that this is not a new concept, but rather an increased recognition of teacher leadership, visions of expanded teacher leadership roles, and a new hope for the contributions these expanded roles might make in improving schools. That is to say, the recognition of teacher leadership stems in part from new understandings about organizational development and leadership that suggest active involvement by individuals at all levels and within all domains of an organization (Ogawa & Bossett, 1995; Spillane et al, 2011).

Some of the rationale for teacher leadership emphasizes the benefits that can be realized when employees participate to a greater extent in their organizations. One such argument asserted that additional person power is needed to run the organizational operations as in education where schools are viewed as too complex for principals to lead

alone and that the help of teachers is needed to fulfill the responsibilities (Barth, 2001; Kneedy & Finch, 1994). Teacher leadership has been defined by Ogawa and Bossert, (1995), as organizing in that leadership is not confined to certain roles in organizations. It flows through the networks of roles that comprise organizations. They further asserted that leadership was based on the deployment of resources that are distributed throughout the network of roles, with different roles having access to different levels and types of resources. As such, leadership is viewed as a potential capacity of both teachers and administrators (Duke, 1994).

Kormaz (2007) studied the effects of leadership style on the organizational health of schools in Turkey. He cited studies that relate the dissatisfaction of teachers to low salaries, lack of resources, inappropriate administrative leadership styles, and job-related stress. He posits that the principal's leadership style shapes the school's learning climate, the level of relationship between staff, and the teacher morale. Johnson (2004), similarly describes the need for school leaders to reform their schools into more effective learning communities in which teachers have the opportunity to learn and grow as professionals. In addition, the new teachers in Johnson's study identified the importance of administrator support and effective induction programs in determining their success and job satisfaction.

The relationship established between teacher leaders and their principals is identified as strong evidence on teacher leadership (Crowther, et al. 2002). The pivotal role of the principal in facilitating productive teacher-leader-principal relationships is emphasized in the literature (Barth, 2001; Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scriver, 2000; Conzemius, 1999; Crowther et al., 2002, & Terry, 1999). Smylie and Hart (2000) offer a

strong theoretical orientation for the role of principals in developing teacher leaders. These researchers use the concepts of human and social capital in framing school leadership that promotes learning and change. They further define human capital as individual's knowledge, skills and attributes and social capital as the resources that exist because of the collective relationships among individuals. Smylie and Hart (2000) proclaim:

The research is clear that principals play a vital role in the development and maintenance of social capital among teachers. Their contributions come through creating structures and occasions for interaction to take place and for social bonds to form, mobilizing groups for interaction, and establishing broad support systems. Beyond these managerial functions principals play an active role in fostering productive social relations within the structures they may help to create. They foster social trust by exhibiting consistency and competence in their work. (p. 436)

Strong endorsement of teacher professionalization continues as evidenced in recommendations made by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) focused on encouraging and rewarding career-long development and by the Council of Chief State Officers (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996), in their standards for school leaders, which supported a collaborative approach to school leadership.

Research on teacher leadership spans three decades; however, it gained greater prominence in the 1990s with Peter Senge's (1993) work on the learning organization and systems-thinking. During this era, there was an increased push to see schools as learning communities and teachers as members and leaders in a community of learners.

In fact, Day and Harris (2003) described the four dimensions of teacher leadership as 1) teacher as broker—translating school improvement plans and policies into practice in the classroom; 2) teacher as participative leader-- shaping, encouraging and championing school improvement efforts to colleagues in order to support a shared goal or vision; 3) teacher as mediator—using instructional expertise to mediate school improvement in the classroom and with colleagues; and 4) teacher as learner—forging relationships with peers where mutual learning takes place. Hence, three out of the four dimensions focus on teachers as members of learning communities. As such, the involvement of teachers in decision-making increases the chance that school improvement initiatives will be supported the professional learning communities where the four dimensions of teacher leadership flourish.

Schmoker (2004) cited a groundswell of researchers and educators who advocate for promoting the structures found in collaborative Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Along with these experts, DuFour (2007), identifies widespread interest in instituting PLCs among professional groups and organizations. Schmoker (2004) borrows Malcom Gladwell's concept of a "tipping point" to herald the emergence of PLCs in contrast to large-scale models such as whole-school reform. While Schmoker acknowledges in his literature that PLCs have not yet reached critical mass, he notes the growth of teachers collaborating in planning as indications of milestones toward learning communities. Fullan (2006), reports that interest in learning communities has moved beyond the whisper of researchers to a growing movement among practitioners. The announcements and descriptions available on district Web sites also provide further evidence to strengthen the assertion that PLCs are increasing as a model of support. In

California, Torrance Unified School District announced implementation of a PLC model at the elementary schools (Torrance Unified School District, 2008), and notified parents of early dismissal times on days when PLCs meet. The Austin Independent School district in Austin, Texas announced PLCs as a professional development strategy to break patterns of isolation seen in typical secondary schools (Austin Independent School District, 2008). Durham Public Schools in Durham, North Carolina are beginning to implement PLCs district-wide, first through monthly trainings for department chairs, with full implementation of teams to take place the following year (Durham Public Schools, 2008). The fundamental premise of distributed leadership disperses leadership capacity throughout the faculty, empowers teachers, and assists in sustaining change within the organization. (Spillane et al., 2004) described distributed leadership as the educational leadership practice for the 21st century. In addition, Harris (2003), “considered the idea of distributed leadership . . . at the cutting edge of thinking about leadership activity in schools” (p.125). Also contributing to the concept, Gold (2004) asserted that the practice of distributed leadership links teacher leadership with a school’s capacity for change and development. The next section explores how PLCs provide a mechanism for this change.

Overview of Professional Learning Community

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) concept operates from the premise that leadership should be widely dispersed throughout a school, and thus developing the leadership potential of all staff members is imperative (Dufour & Eaker, 2004). Principals in PLCs are called upon to regard themselves as leaders of leaders rather than leaders of followers and broadening teacher leadership becomes one of their priorities (Dufour, 2002). The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003, p.

17) concluded that “shared or distributive leadership was essential to building learning communities” (DuFour & Eaker, 2004). The importance of widely dispersed leadership is indicated in the research of Danielson (2006). This extensive research concluded that leadership is not a solo act and that fostering collaboration is the route to high performance. In fact, to become a PLC, the researchers conclude that a school must transcend its dependence on single leader and develop a culture that sustains improvement despite the departure of key individuals (DuFour & Eaker, 2008).

In the classic book, *Schoolteacher*, Lortie interviewed hundreds of teachers and found that they worked in almost total isolation relative to other professions (Dufour, 2004). Professional Learning Communities are the means by which teacher isolation can be eliminated and thereby, promote collaborative and reflective culture (Eastwood & Lewis, 1992). The research of Elmore (2000) posits that schools can enhance the organizational capacity to boost student learning if they build a professional community that is characterized by shared purpose, collaborative activity, and collective responsibility among staff. Thus, quality teaching requires strong professional learning communities. Collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers.

Over the past decade, both educational researchers and policymakers have focused on the degree of organizational control over teachers and their work in schools (Ingersoll, 1993). They argue that highly bureaucratized school systems have become rigid and unresponsive and that schools have become the epitome of the modern centralized undemocratic bureaucracy (Conley & Cooper, 1991; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989). Teachers work in their individual classrooms with little time to interact and connect with other adults (Combs & Whitaker, 1999). Creating a collaborative

environment has been described as the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives and the first order of business for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their school (Eastwood & Lewis, 1992).

Characteristics of PLCs

PLCs are defined by DuFour et al. (2006) as “ educators connected to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (p. 217). Further, “PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators” (p.217). The writers identify five characteristics of professional learning communities quoted below:

- A Collaborative Culture with a Focus on Learning - A PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals that are linked to the purpose of learning for all and for which members are held mutually accountable. In a PLC, collaboration is a systematic process in which teachers work together interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve results for their students, their team, and their school.
- Collective Inquiry into Best Practice and Current Reality - Educators in a PLC engage in collective inquiry into 1) best practices about teaching and learning, 2) a candid clarification of their current practices, and 3) an honest assessment of their students’ current levels of learning.
- Action Orientation: Learning by Doing - Members of PLCs work together in teams and engage in collective inquiry to serve as a catalyst for action.

Educators in PLCs recognize that until members of the organization do differently, there is no reason to anticipate different results

- A Commitment to Continuous Improvement- Persistent disquiet with the status quo and a constant search for a better way to achieve goals and accomplish the purpose of the organization are inherent in the PLC culture.
- Results Orientation - The members of a PLC realize that all of their efforts in these areas, a focus on learning, collaborative teams, collective inquiry, action orientation, and continuous improvement should be assessed on the basis of results rather than intentions. The rationale for any strategy for building a learning organization revolves around the premise that such organizations will produce dramatically improved results. (DuFour et al. 2006. p. 217)

Research Supporting PLCs

There is abundant research to support Professional Learning Communities as listed and documented by DuFour et al. (2008). The Annesberg Institute for School Reform (2004) proclaimed that PLCs have the potential to enhance the professional culture within a school district and encouraged the use of professional learning communities as a central element for effective professional development and a comprehensive reform initiative. In the most successful schools, leadership ensures that there are integrated communities of professional practice in the service of student academic and social learning. There is a healthy school environment in which student learning is the central focus. As such, research has demonstrated that schools organized as communities, rather than bureaucracies, are more likely to exhibit academic success (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2007).

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) suggest that schools have not been as successful in establishing professional learning communities because it requires re-culturing the profession. Most site-based managed schools are micro-centralized institutions and are not organized to capitalize on the diverse talents of individuals in a collective manner (Marks & Louis, 1999). In the context of the school setting, the needs and goals of the professional community are focused on student learning (Hord & Sommers, 2008). According to the research of Wells and Feun (2007), the basic framework for initiating the process of changing the school organization into a learning community would include (a) engaging in inquiry (b) breaking patterns of teacher isolation, (c) embedding collaboration in the work culture, (d) examining and reflecting the effects of instructional strategies and interventions to improve student learning. Moreover, DuFour (2005) adds that for PLCs to be successful in school reform initiatives the effort must center on three major ideas. One major idea requires the stakeholders in the PLC to ensure that students learn by shifting the emphasis on proactive intervention and student learning as an outcome. The second major idea is nurturing a collaborative professional culture for the benefit of student learning and school improvement with teachers aligning their personal goals in the context of the school's vision in removing barriers. Finally, the third idea is for the PLC to focus on results to assure that all stakeholders remain committed to the shared vision and values of student learning.

School Leadership

Professional Learning Communities are composed of teacher leaders who have a shared commitment to teacher, school, or student learning, common goals, or a unified vision. This vision of leadership is consistent with that of Kouzes and Posner (1999) who define leadership as the art of mobilizing and inspiring others to struggle for shared aspirations. Collaborative cultures and the structures that support them are very hard to develop and sustain in the absence of supportive leadership from school administrators (Leithwood, 2006). The principal is viewed as the broker of workplace conditions and as someone whose influence on the school as a workplace for teachers extends well beyond being in charge of the school (Johnson, 2006). Several research projects (Sawchuk, 2010) that focused on teacher opinions about workplace issues provided a rich source of information. The researcher reported that teachers feel the quality of their school's leadership, a say in school decision making, and opportunities to work with their peers affect their own capacity as educators. The research is clear on the analysis of teacher workplace conditions. The analysis indicates that conditions created by the principal matters to teachers, that the method the principal uses to set directions is important to teachers and whether or not the principal is considerate, consultative and supportive in developing people while instituting change determines the success of that change. Managing the instructional program was identified as equally important (Leithwood, 2006).

Findings from surveys of teachers in other studies support Leithwood's view. Using data from a study of North Carolina teachers, Ladd (2009) found that school leadership emerges as the most consistently relevant measure of working conditions. In

another study Hirsch, Freitas, Church, and Villard (2008) determined that two to three times as many teachers who say they want to remain in their current schools agreed with positive statements about school leadership, than did teachers who want to remain in the profession but move to a different school. A survey of Massachusetts teachers determined that a majority of teachers do not feel that school leadership, broadly defined, is responsive to their concerns in the areas that are important to them (Hirsch et al., 2008).

Conclusion

According to Greene (2005), “today’s leaders should create a learning environment that fosters the development of a shared vision and the pursuit of that vision through various forms of participatory decision making” (p. 29). Hord and Sommers (2008), acknowledge the connection between leaders and leadership as pointed out by Lambe(1998) in *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*:

School leadership needs to be a broad concept that is separated from person to person, role, and a discreet set of individual behaviors. It needs to be embedded in the school community as a whole. Such a broadening of the concept of leadership suggests shared responsibility for a shared purpose of community. Researchers, Marzano, Silns, Mulford, and Zarins (2002,) acknowledge the importance of teacher input by noting that, “a school’s effectiveness is proportional to the extent to which teachers participate in all aspects of the school’s functioning”. (p.618)

Leadership for change is most effective when carried out by a small group of educators with the principal functioning as a strong cohesive force (Marzano, 2003). One

of the common misconceptions about leadership at the school level is that it should reside with a single individual, namely the principal (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996).

While it is true that strong leadership from the principal can be a powerful force in school reform, the notion that an individual can effect change by sheer will and personality is not supported by the research as posited by (Blasé & Kirby, 2000).

Overall, the literature concurs with the assertion that a substantive change initiative must be supported both by administrators and teacher leaders. There are significant studies completed on leadership practices and successful leadership models to support school improvement. Although there are several core concepts determined to have a significant impact on improving failing schools, this study focuses on leadership practices, collaboration, and school organization/shared decision-making (Green, 2012). Hence, study revealed the leadership processes that occur in elementary and middle schools, particularly as it relates to the distribution of leadership and how it impacts those who work directly with the students.

Chapter 3

Methods

After a restatement of the research questions, the present chapter begins with an explanation of the general methodology employed in this study—specifically, secondary analysis of an existing set of survey data—and a description of the instrument from which these survey data were derived—namely, the *Measures of Effective Teaching (MET)/Working Conditions Survey*—including the instrument’s psychometric properties. In the next section, the conditions under which the MET/Working Conditions data were collected are outlined and a statistical description of the more than 5,000 persons whose responses constitute the present dataset is provided in two tables. The final section of the chapter provides a statement of the analytic strategies to be employed in answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent do elementary and middle schools’ teachers perceive they are being treated as educational leaders at their schools?
2. To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers at the elementary school level differ from the teachers at the middle school level regarding being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?
3. To what extent, within the elementary and middle school levels, are the perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers moderated by their years of experience and their years of experience at the school?
4. Across eight areas of educational decision-making, to what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive themselves as taking on leadership roles at their schools?

5. To what extents do the perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions differ regarding their leadership roles?

To what extent are the perceptions of leadership roles moderated by elementary and middle school teachers according to their total years of experience and their years of experience at their schools?

Overall Methodology

According to Charles (1998), research is usually categorized in terms of its general methodology. In educational studies, he notes that the researcher may employ the use of qualitative, quantitative, experimental, or non-experimental methodology to frame his study. When employing a quantitative approach, questionnaires, tests, records, standardized observation instruments, and existing data bases can serve as appropriate sources for data (Patton, 1997). Common to the quantitative approach is the utilization of data from human samples and the placing of that the data in predetermined categories for statistical analysis, the intended result being an unbiased and objective interpretation of data (Creswell, 2008).

Drawing upon an existing data source—that being data derived from a 2010 administration of the MET/Working Conditions Survey data to more 5000 educational practitioners at over 200 schools—the researcher approached the six research questions posed by this study in a quantitative fashion, working in a venue of inquiry commonly referred to as “secondary analysis.”

According to Hakim (1982), secondary data analysis may be defined as “further analysis of an existing data-set which presents interpretations, conclusions, or knowledge additional to, or different from, those presented in the first report on the data collection

and its results” (p. 1). On this definition, specific uses to which such analyses may be put include:

- Condensed reports (such as social area analysis based on selected social indicators)
- More detailed reports (offering additional detail on the same topic)
- Reports which focus on a particular sub-topic (such as unemployment) or social group (such as ethnic minority)
- Reports angled towards a particular policy issue or question
- Analyses based on a conceptual framework or theory not applied to the original analysis
- Re-analyses which take advantage of more sophisticated analytical techniques to test hypotheses and answer questions in a more comprehensive and succinct manner than in the original report. (Hakim, 1982, p. 1)

Given the uses outlined, the present study would appear to lend itself to secondary analysis as it seems to be productive of the kinds of information outlined by Hakim. First, it focuses on “a particular subtopic” included in the original study—namely, teacher leadership—and explores the initial results pertinent to that subtopic found in greater depth. With respect to Research Question 1 and Research Question 4, inspection of the 15 teacher leadership items on the MET/Working Conditions Survey suggests that the first set of seven items are primarily concerned with affect (see Research Question 1), touching upon issues pertinent to the “human relations” and “symbolic” frames discussed by Bolman and Deal, while the second set of eight items are more cognitively

and behaviorally-oriented (see Research Question 4), speaking to decision-making concerns subsumed by Bolman and Deal's "structural" and "political" frames. Via secondary analysis, greater depth of understanding is achieved by investigating both affective and cognitive/behavioral aspects of teacher leadership in tandem, rather than serially.

Adding further to this understanding is the application of somewhat "more sophisticated analytical techniques to . . . answer questions" (Hakim, p. 1) that were not fully addressed or were unaddressed in the prior study. In the present one, the effects of institutional level on teacher responses are considered (see Research Questions 2 and 5) as well as those effects pertinent to teachers' "total" and "school specific" educational experiences (see Research Questions 3 and 6). Of necessity, more sophisticated analytic techniques are evoked to uncover the status of these variables as mediators and to gauge the extent of their contributions to more positive working conditions for teachers and more enabling learning environments for students.

Instrumentation

Purpose and Structure

A review of the literature indicates that a wide variety of measures of the school environment—whether conceived of under the aegis of "school climate," "learning environment" "teacher working conditions," etc.—are in use. Witcher (1993) reviewed several of these measures and found that those that resulted in the most reliable assessments were those that generated information about multiple aspects of the school—including "an emphasis on academics, an ambience of caring, a motivating curriculum, professional collegiality, and closeness to parents and community." These most reliable

instruments were also easy for respondents to understand, were appropriate to several levels of schooling and possessed of adequate evidence of psychometric validity and reliability.

A survey that meets many, if not all, of these requirements is the MET (Measures of Effective Teaching)/Working Conditions Survey. Originally developed in 2002 by the New Teacher Center, the instrument made its debut in North Carolina as the “Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative Survey” as part of the work of then-Governor Mike Easley and his state’s Professional Teaching Standards Commission. Over the past decade, the reach of the survey has extended to 12 states and 10 districts, providing information to both policymakers and practitioners about the following eight research-based constructs:

- Time—Available time to plan, to collaborate, to provide instruction, and to eliminate barriers in order to maximize instructional time during the school day
- Facilities and Resources—Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers
- Community Support and Involvement—Community and parent/guardian communication and influence in the school
- Managing Student Conduct—Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment
- Teacher Leadership—Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices

- School Leadership—The ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns
- Professional Development—Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching
- Instructional Practices and Support—Data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning. (TELL Tennessee, 2012)

Perhaps because of the number of aspects of schooling that the instrument addresses, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have insisted that the districts with which it works administer a version of the New Teacher Center’s “Teaching and Learning Conditions Questionnaire” as part of its “Measures of Effective Teaching” initiative. Hoping to get beyond “how well a teacher’s students do on assessments,” according to the Gates’ Foundation website, “the ‘Measures of Effective Teaching’ project seeks to uncover and develop a set of measures that work together to form a more complete indicator of a teacher’s impact on student achievement” (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2012). Collecting data derived from such diverse sources as student surveys, supplemental student assessments, videotaped classroom lessons, teacher reflection on these lessons, and assessments of teacher’ ability to recognize and diagnose student problems, the Gates Foundation also administers a version of Teaching and Learning Conditions Questionnaire that is tailored to the local contexts with which it partners. By means of this instrument, the Foundation seeks to render a kind of status report of within-school strengths and weaknesses that have been linked to retaining or losing effective teachers and, by extension, supporting or not supporting student

achievement. The present dataset derives from the Gates Foundation partnership with a local district.

Validity and Reliability

Some degree of informal or *prima facie* evidence of the validity of the MET/Working Conditions seems inherent in the instrument's longevity and wide usage. According to the New Teacher Center website, the information provided by the instrument has been of such high quality as to provide its former clients with sufficient guidance in such matters as

- rewriting standards for principals and teachers;
 - allocating funds to support utilizing survey data in low-performing school districts;
 - supporting the creation of additional funding for professional development in low-performing schools;
 - developing school leadership training that requires administrators to use the survey data in making school-level improvement decisions;
 - changing professional development offerings and providing teachers with more autonomy in selecting growth opportunities; and
 - implementing targeted recruitment strategies for hard-to-staff schools
- (New Teacher Center, 2012).

Aside from this sort of informal, testimonial evidence, more formal evidence of the validity of MET/Working Conditions Survey has been recently marshaled by the state of Tennessee with respect to an adaptation of the original North Carolina survey that it refers to as "TELL Tennessee." An acronym for "Teaching, Empowering, Leading and

Learning,” the TELL Tennessee website charts the evolution of the instrument’s “content validity.” As relayed by the website, the items constituting the North Carolina instrument originated in one part from a wide-ranging literature review of research on the role of working conditions on teacher dissatisfaction and teacher mobility and in another part from School and Staffing Survey data “focused on areas that teachers identified as conditions that drove their satisfaction and employment decisions, including administrative support, autonomy in making decisions, school safety, class size, time, etc” (TELL Tennessee, 2012).

In addition to issues concerning “content validity,” the TELL Tennessee website also points to studies done to establish the instrument’s “construct validity.” Using data taken from 400,000 teachers from 5,000 schools in 12 states, Swanlund (2011) used a combination of factor analysis and “Rasch measurement modeling” to examine the dimensionality of the instrument. In his analyses, Swanlund found more constructs (13) than the eight that the instrument purported to measure. However, Swanlund went onto note that the additional constructs seemed also to fit comfortably within the eight-construct framework, with the additional five clusters of items serving to refine four of the original domains. When an early wave of TELL Tennessee data were analyzed using an approach similar to Swanlund’s, the analyst identified 10 constructs, with the Facilities and Resources construct and Instructional Practices and Support construct each splitting into two subsets.

In terms of reliability, TELL Tennessee reports that all items pertinent to measuring eight of the original constructs exhibit adequate levels of “internal consistency” reliability, with alpha statistics observed to be 0.83 or higher.

In sum, all statistical analyses carried out to date suggest that the original instrument and its variants do indeed “measure what they purport to measure” (Popham, 2011), but that more fine-grained conclusions may be drawn about specific groups of items within two or three of the constructs.

Specific Items Employed

As previously noted, the MET/Working Conditions Survey measures between 8 and 10 constructs, but only one of these constructs is pertinent to the present study of teacher leadership. Using a 4-point scale, where a value of “1” signifies “strong disagreement,” a value of “2” signifies “disagreement,” a value of “3” signifies “agreement,” and a value of “4” signifies “strong agreement,” the seven items following address teacher leadership from an affective perspective and are the common focus of Research Questions 1 through 3:

- a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.
- b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.
- c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.
- d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.
- e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems
- f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.
- g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.

On a similar rating scale, where a value of “1” signifies “no role,” a value of “2” signifies “a small role,” a value of “3” signifies “a moderate role” and a value of “4” signifies “a large role,” the eight items following address teacher leadership from an cognitive/behavioral perspective, are the common focus of Research Questions 4 through

6, and speak directly to the level of discretion that teachers have in carrying out the tasks below:

- a. Selecting instructional materials and resources
- b. Devising teaching techniques
- c. Setting grading and student assessment practices
- d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs
- e. Establishing student discipline procedures
- f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent
- g. The selection of teachers new to this school
- h. School improvement planning

Sample of Respondents Providing the Data

Schools responding to these items were elementary and middle schools, located in a large district in the Southeastern United States. As previously outlined, the district was one of a select number with whom the Gates Foundation chose to work, although it was the local district office of research and evaluation that made the dataset available to the researcher for secondary analysis. Provided in Table 1 is a statistical description of all district respondents who completed the MET/Working Conditions Survey, while Table 2 provides a similar description of just those classroom teachers at the elementary and middle school levels who completed the instrument. Prior to conducting the research for this study, permission was requested from the Institution Review Board (IRB) at The University of Memphis to conduct the study.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of All Respondents to the 2010 Administration of the Measures of Effective Teaching Working Conditions Survey (N = 5007)

Group	All (N = 5007) %	Elem (n = 2765) %	Middle (n = 986) %	High (n = 1065) %	Others (n = 191) %
Teachers	91.8	92.8	90.1	91.9	85.9
Principals	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.0	3.7
Ass't Principals	0.7	0.3	1.7	0.8	1.6
Others	6.0	5.5	6.5	6.2	8.9
Total Years Employed as an Educator: All Respondents					
First Year	5.0	3.0	6.6	8.6	5.8
2 to 3 Years	9.1	6.7	11.3	13.3	8.9
4 to 6 Years	11.7	9.3	16.7	13.1	14.1
7 to 10 Years	17.5	18.1	18.0	16.5	12.0
11 to 20 Years	29.6	32.9	27.1	24.8	20.9
20 + Years	26.8	29.8	20.0	23.3	38.2
Not Answered	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.0
Total Years Employed at Present School: All Respondents					
First Year	14.1	10.5	6.6	21.1	23.0
2 to 3 Years	19.2	16.3	11.3	22.7	9.4
4 to 6 Years	20.9	20.4	16.7	19.4	18.3
7 to 10 Years	16.8	19.7	18.0	12.6	12.0
11 to 20 Years	15.9	18.8	27.1	11.9	17.3
20 + Years	7.7	9.0	20.0	7.1	12.0
Not Answered	5.3	5.2	0.4	5.1	7.9
Sites	206	112	39	41	14

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Teacher Respondents to the 2010 Administration of the Measures of Effective Teaching Working Conditions Survey (n = 4596)

Group	All (N = 4596) %	Elem (n = 2565) %	Middle (n = 888) %	High (n = 979) %	Others (n = 164) %
Total Years Employed as an Educator: Teachers Only					
First Year	5.2	3.0	7.0	9.1	6.7
2 to 3 Years	9.5	6.9	12.2	14.0	9.8
4 to 6 Years	11.9	9.2	17.6	13.4	14.6
7 to 10 Years	17.8	18.6	17.7	16.5	12.8
11 to 20 Years	29.4	33.1	25.8	24.0	22.6
20 + Years	26.0	29.0	19.5	22.7	33.5
Not Answered	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.0
Total Years Employed at Present School: Teachers Only					
First Year	14.1	10.4	15.1	21.6	22.6
2 to 3 Years	19.5	16.2	26.4	23.3	9.8
4 to 6 Years	20.4	20.2	23.8	18.6	17.7
7 to 10 Years	16.9	19.9	14.3	12.3	12.8
11 to 20 Years	16.2	19.0	11.8	12.4	17.7
20 + Years	7.7	9.0	4.1	6.9	11.6
Not Answered	5.2	5.3	4.6	5.0	7.9

Proposed Analyses

Differing only in terms of their target, parallel kinds of statistical analyses will be conducted across the first set of three questions, all of which concern the extent to which teachers are being treated as educational leaders, and the second set of three questions, all of which concern the extent to which teachers play a role in making key decisions at the school. For Research Questions 1 and 4, item level frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations will be computed for the sample as a whole, as well for subgroups of respondents categorized as either elementary or middle level. For Research Questions 2 and 5, these item level frequencies will be recoded into two broad categories, cross-tabulated with the educational level of the respondent and tested for statistical significance using the “two-way” *chi-square* procedure accompanied by a *phi coefficient*. For the seven affectively-oriented items, recoding will regroup responses into two broad categories as to the perceived truth of the statement: either strong disagreement/disagreement or agreement/strong agreement. For the eight cognitively/behaviorally-oriented items, recoding will regroup responses into two broad categories as to the perceived level of participation in the decision area: either no role/small role in the decision area or a moderate/large role in the decision area.

For Research Questions 3 and 6, the same analytic strategies will be employed but will differ in the grouping of the respondents. In an effort to determine whether the extent of teachers’ experience mediate the results by level, elementary and middle school teachers responses will be handled separately and teachers within the two levels grouped by teaching experience. Because the dataset provided two related but distinct related measures of experience, four analyses are involved in answering Research Questions 3 and 6: a set of elementary analyses by teachers’ total years of experience and their years

of experience at the school and a set of elementary analyses by teachers' total years of experience and their years of experience at the school. With respect to these measures of experience, teachers were grouped into two categories so as maintain sufficient and balanced numbers of teachers in each cell of the cross-tabulation: specifically, "between one and 10 years" and "more than 10 years" for total years of teaching experience and "between one and six years" and "more than six years" for years of teaching experience at the present school. Given four cells in each of the aforementioned four analyses, and *chi-square* and the *phi coefficient* will again be the statistical indices employed to determine whether a significant relationship exists between variables and, if so, the strength of such relationships.

To summarize, provided in this chapter were an explanation of the method of "secondary analysis" and how it applies to the present study, a description of the instrument used and the sample of educators who responded to that instrument, and an outline of the descriptive statistics and inferential procedures used to address the study's six research questions. The answers to these six research questions will be detailed in the following Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

Chapter 4 of this study presents the results of a secondary analysis of an existing set of survey data namely, the *Measures of Effective Teaching (MET) Working Conditions Survey*. Specifically focused on were seven *MET* survey items concerning teacher perceptions of the extent to which they were regarded as leaders at their school and eight additional *MET* survey items concerning the extent of their perceived influence on school decision making. Breaking these item-level responses out by educational “level” (as elementary and secondary) and by particular subgroups within educational levels (that is, by total years teaching experience and by tenure at their present school), the six research questions driving this study are as follows:

1. To what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive they are being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?
2. To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers at the elementary school level differ from the teachers at the middle school level regarding being treated as teacher leaders in their schools?
3. To what extent, within the elementary and middle school teachers’ are these perceptions moderated by elementary and middle school teachers’ years of experience and by their years of experience at their schools?
4. Across the eight areas of educational decision making, to what extent do elementary and middle school level teachers perceive themselves as taking on leadership roles at their schools?

5. In what ways are these perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions differ regarding their leadership roles?
6. In what ways are these perceptions of leadership roles moderated by elementary and middle school teachers' years of experience and by their years of experience at their schools?

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: To what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive they are being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?

Presented in Table 3 are the frequencies and percentages for the seven teacher leadership items by respondent level of disagreement and agreement, along with item-level means and standard deviations for all respondents and by respondent educational level as elementary and middle. Inspection of these outcomes suggests generally positive responses to these items, with little difference in the item means observed by subgroups teachers by level. While most responses varied around a mean of 3.0, those observed for the item that concerned “having an effective process for making group decisions” slipped slightly below that benchmark ($M = 2.8, SD = 0.81$), while those observed for teachers being “effective leaders in this school” edged slightly above it, especially for elementary teachers ($M = 3.1, SD = 0.74$), versus middle level teachers ($M = 3.0, SD = 0.73$). With respect to the group decision making item, only 72.2% of the respondents agreed overall, while with respect to the item concerning teachers' effectiveness as leaders more than 83% of the total number of respondents agreed.

Table 3

Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations for Items Concerning Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Leadership

Statement about Teacher Leadership	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree		Agree/ Strongly Agree		<u>All</u>		<u>Elem</u>		<u>Middle</u>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	719	21.4	2642	78.6	3.0	0.78	3.0	0.78	2.9	0.78
b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	724	21.5	2639	78.5	3.0	0.80	3.0	0.80	3.0	0.80
c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	808	24.1	2540	75.9	2.9	0.79	2.9	0.79	2.9	0.79
d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	543	16.3	2794	83.7	3.0	0.76	3.0	0.76	3.0	0.75
e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	912	27.8	2371	72.2	2.8	0.81	2.8	0.81	2.8	0.82
f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.	728	21.9	2598	78.1	2.9	0.77	2.9	0.78	2.9	0.77
g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	564	16.9	2774	83.1	3.0	0.74	3.1	0.74	3.0	0.73

Research Question 2: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers at the

elementary school level differ from the teachers at the middle school level regarding being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?

For each of the seven items, four cells containing frequencies and percentages were created by collapsing respondent levels of agreement and disagreement with the item into two response categories and then crossing these responses with the respondent's status as an elementary or a middle-level teacher. To determine whether a statistically significant relationship was observed between response level and teacher status, *chi-square* tests of independence (sometimes referred to as "two-way" *chi-square* tests) were subsequently conducted for each item and *phi coefficients* were computed as an index of effect size. As shown in Table 4, the results indicated no statistically significant relationship between the two dimensions except for the item concerning "teachers (being) effective leaders in this school" ($\chi^2(1) = 6.30, p = .012, \phi = -0.04$). Consistent with what was said above about the item means apropos Research Question 1, responses to this item indicated a higher percentage of agreement among elementary teachers (84.1%) as opposed to middle-level teachers (80.3%).

Table 4
Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages, for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teacher Leadership at the Elementary and Middle School Levels

Statement about Teacher Leadership	Elementary Teachers				Middle Teachers				ϕ
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Agree/Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Agree/Strongly Agree		
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	524	21.0	1971	79.0	195	22.5	671	77.5	-0.02
b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	535	21.5	1956	78.5	189	21.7	683	78.3	0.00
c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	600	24.2	1882	75.8	208	24.0	658	76.0	0.00
d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	397	16.0	2077	84.0	146	16.9	717	83.1	-0.01
e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	660	27.1	1779	72.9	252	29.9	592	70.1	-0.03
f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.	527	21.4	1939	78.6	201	23.4	659	76.6	-0.02
g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	396	15.9	2088	84.1	168	19.7	686	80.3	* -0.04

* $p < .05$.

Research Question 3: Within the elementary and middle school levels, to what extent, if any, are the perceptions of teachers regarding their treatment as leaders moderated by their total years of experience and their years of experience at the school?

By the respondents' years of experience and their years of experience at the school, results pertinent to subgroups of elementary teachers are respectively presented in Tables 5 and 7, while results pertinent to subgroups of middle-level teachers are respectively presented in Tables 6 and 8. By total years of experience, less experienced elementary teachers appeared to be more likely to agree (at 78.5%) than their more experienced counterparts (at 74.1%) that "teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues" ($\chi^2(1) = 6.37, p = .012, \phi = -0.05$). Conversely, however, more experienced elementary teachers seemed more likely to agree (at 74.2%) than their less experienced counterparts (at 70.8%) that "the faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems" ($\chi^2(1) = 3.51, p = .061, \phi = 0.04$). With respect to middle-level teachers, two items discriminated among subgroups of teachers by years of experience but, in both instances, higher levels of agreement were observed among respondents with less total experience. In the first instance, a statistically significant relationship between level of agreement and years of experience was observed for the item concerning teachers being "trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction" ($\chi^2(1) = 4.28, p = .039, \phi = -0.07$), with middle level teachers having less experience (at 80.9%) agreeing at somewhat higher rate than those with more experience (at 75.1%). In the second instance, a statistically significant relationship between level of agreement and years of experience was observed for the item concerning teachers "relied

upon to make decisions about educational issues” ($\chi^2(1) = 2.97, p = .085, \phi = -0.06$), with middle level teachers having less experience (at 78.2%) agreeing at somewhat higher rate than those with more experience (at 73.1%).

When categorized by their teaching “tenure”—that is, as teachers’ having six or fewer years of experience at their current school or more than six years of experience at their current school—elementary respondents in the former category systematically tended more often to agree with the six teacher leadership items than teachers in the latter category, while the opposite was observed with respect to middle-level teachers. For three of the seven tests conducted on elementary teachers’ responses by years of experience, statistically significant *chi-square* outcomes were observed for the items concerning teachers being “encouraged to participate in school leadership roles” ($\chi^2(1) = 6.11, p = .013, \phi = 0.05$), their having “an effective decision making process” ($\chi^2(1) = 3.27, p = .070, \phi = 0.04$), and their taking “steps to solve problems” ($\chi^2(1) = 3.22, p = .073, \phi = 0.04$). For each of these items, the level of agreement expressed by elementary teachers with more tenure tended to exceed that observed for elementary teachers with less tenure by roughly 4%. At the middle level, statistically significant *chi-square* outcomes were observed for two teacher leadership items: specifically, the item concerning teachers being “recognized as educational experts” ($\chi^2(1) = 4.10, p = .043, \phi = -0.07$) and their being “relied upon to make decisions about educational issues” ($\chi^2(1) = 2.98, p = .084, \phi = -0.06$). For both of these items, the level of agreement expressed by middle level teachers with less tenure tended to exceed that expressed by their more experienced counterparts by as much as 6%.

Table 5

Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages, for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teacher Leadership at the Elementary Level by Overall Years of Experience

Statement about Teacher Leadership (Elementary)	One to 10 Years				More than 10 Years				ϕ
	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree		Agree/ Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree/ Disagree		Agree/ Strongly Agree		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	188	19.9	758	80.1	335	21.7	1209	78.3	-0.02
b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	192	20.3	755	79.7	342	22.2	1197	77.8	-0.02
c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	203	21.5	743	78.5	397	25.9	1134	74.1	* -0.05
d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	140	15.1	790	84.9	257	16.7	1282	83.3	-0.02
e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	269	29.2	651	70.8	390	25.8	1124	74.2	† 0.04
f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.	213	22.8	722	77.2	314	20.6	1212	79.4	0.03
g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	144	15.3	796	84.7	252	16.4	1287	83.6	-0.01

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.

Table 6
Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages, for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teacher Leadership at the Middle Level by Overall Years of Experience

Statement about Teacher Leadership (Middle)	One to Ten Years				More than Ten Years				ϕ
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Agree/Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Agree/Strongly Agree		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	98	20.9	370	79.1	97	24.6	298	75.4	-0.04
b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	91	19.1	385	80.9	98	24.9	295	75.1	* -0.07
c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	103	21.8	369	78.2	105	26.9	286	73.1	† -0.06
d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	77	16.6	387	83.4	69	17.4	327	82.6	-0.01
e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	142	31.4	310	68.6	110	28.3	279	71.7	0.03
f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.	110	23.7	355	76.3	91	23.2	301	76.8	0.01
g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	87	18.8	375	81.2	81	20.8	309	79.2	-0.02

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.

Table 7
Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teacher Leadership at the Elementary Level by Years of Experience at Present School

Statement about Teacher Leadership (Elementary)	<u>One to Six Years</u>				<u>More than Six Years</u>				ϕ
	Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Agree/Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree/Disagree		Agree/Strongly Agree		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	258	22.0	913	78.0	239	20.0	955	80.0	0.02
b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	263	22.5	906	77.5	247	20.7	944	79.3	0.02
c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	269	23.1	895	76.9	301	25.3	888	74.7	-0.03
d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	209	18.2	941	81.8	172	14.4	1022	85.6	* 0.05
e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	331	29.2	803	70.8	304	25.8	873	74.2	† 0.04
f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.	266	23.1	887	76.9	237	20.0	947	80.0	† 0.04
g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	202	17.3	963	82.7	177	14.9	1012	85.1	0.03

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.

Table 8
Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teacher Leadership at the Middle Level by Years of Experience at Present School

Statement about Teacher Leadership (Middle)	One to Six Years				More than Six years				ϕ
	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree		Agree/ Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree/ Disagree		Agree/ Strongly Agree		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
a. Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	116	20.5	450	79.5	70	26.8	191	73.2	* -0.07
b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	116	20.4	454	79.6	65	24.8	197	75.2	-0.05
c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	128	22.5	440	77.5	73	28.1	187	71.9	† -0.06
d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	94	16.7	469	83.3	44	16.9	216	83.1	0.00
e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	162	29.4	389	70.6	80	31.4	175	68.6	-0.02
f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.	127	22.6	434	77.4	66	25.4	194	74.6	-0.03
g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school.	109	19.5	451	80.5	52	20.3	204	79.7	-0.01

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.

Research Question 4: Across the eight areas of educational decision making, to what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive themselves as taking on leadership roles at their schools?

While teachers' level of agreement with respect to items concerning their being treated as leaders was systematically high, much more variability was observed in teachers' responses when they were asked about the degree to which they played leadership roles in making eight kinds of decisions at their schools. As shown in Table 9, over 75% of the teachers surveyed felt that they enacted a role that was at least "moderate" or even "large" role with respect to such decisions as "devising teaching techniques" (at 79.5%) and "school improvement planning" (at 75.5%). Conversely, almost the same percentages of teachers within the same respondent pool felt that they played either "small" role or "no role" at all with respect to such decision making areas as "providing input on how the school budget will be spent" (at 77.4%) and getting involved in "selection of teachers new to this school" (at 70.9%). Somewhere between these two extremes, with roughly 60% asserting their roles to be "moderate" or "large" and 40% asserting their roles to be "small" or non-existent, teachers were much more divided in their thinking about the scope of their discretion with respect to such in classroom-oriented decisions as "selecting instructional materials and resources, "setting grading and student assessment practices" and "establishing student discipline procedures,"

Indeed, slightly over half of all responding teachers seem to feel that they were to some extent bystanders with respect to "determining the content of in-service professional development programs," with some 52.0% holding their role to be "small" at best.

Table 9

Frequencies, Percentages, Means and Standard Deviations for Items Concerning Teachers' Leadership Roles in School Decision-Making

Decision-Making Area	No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role		All		Elem		Middle	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
a. Selecting instructional materials and resources	1246	38.2	2014	61.8	2.8	0.97	2.8	0.97	2.8	0.96
b. Devising teaching techniques	678	20.5	2631	79.5	3.2	0.88	3.2	0.90	3.3	0.83
c. Setting grading and student assessment practices	1231	37.3	2068	62.7	2.8	1.00	2.7	1.00	2.9	0.99
d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs	1697	52.0	1564	48.0	2.4	0.97	2.4	0.97	2.3	0.99
e. Establishing student discipline procedures	1201	35.9	2140	64.1	2.8	0.95	2.8	0.95	2.7	0.95
f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent	2439	77.4	712	22.6	1.8	0.91	1.8	0.90	1.8	0.94
g. The selection of teachers new to this school	2248	70.9	921	29.1	2.0	0.99	2.0	0.99	1.9	0.98
h. School improvement planning	803	24.5	2475	75.5	3.1	0.94	3.1	0.93	3.0	0.97

Research Question 5: To what extent do the perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions differ regarding their leadership roles?

Consistent with the diversity of opinion observed across the sample, there were numerous differences about the scope of teacher discretion observed within the sample, by the schooling level at which the respondent taught. As shown in Table 10, significantly more teachers at the middle than the elementary level felt that their decision making role was to some extent substantial with respect to such concerns as “devising teaching techniques” ($\chi^2(1) = 7.81, p = .005, \phi = 0.05$) and “setting grading and student assessment practices” ($\chi^2(1) = 16.90, p < .001, \phi = 0.07$), with about 4% more asserting that to be the case for the former item and about 8% more asserting that to be the case for the latter item. Conversely, as also revealed in Table 10, between 4.9% and 6.6% of all elementary teachers perceived their level of discretion to be greater than that of their middle school counterparts with respect to such concerns as “determining the content of in-service professional development programs” ($\chi^2(1) = 6.17, p = .013, \phi = -0.04$), “establishing student discipline procedures” ($\chi^2(1) = 9.36, p = .002, \phi = -0.05$), providing for “the selection of teachers new to this school” ($\chi^2(1) = 6.80, p = .009, \phi = -0.05$), and having input into “school improvement planning” ($\chi^2(1) = 14.83, p < .001, \phi = -0.07$). As suggested by the relative size of the *phi coefficients*, the smallest percentage difference in the size of the role by schooling level was seen for professional development content (at 49.2% for elementary teachers and 44.3% for middle level teachers) and the largest for school improvement planning (at 77.2% for elementary teachers and 70.6% for middle level teachers).

Table 10
Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teachers' Leadership Roles in Decision Making at the Elementary and Middle School Levels

Decision-Making Area	<u>Elementary Teachers</u>				<u>Middle Teachers</u>				ϕ	
	No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role		No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
a. Selecting instructional materials and resources	934	38.6	1483	61.4	312	37.0	531	63.0		0.01
b. Devising teaching techniques	532	21.6	1926	78.4	146	17.2	705	82.8	**	0.05
c. Setting grading and student assessment practices	962	39.4	1482	60.6	269	31.5	586	68.5	***	0.07
d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs	1231	50.8	1194	49.2	466	55.7	370	44.3	*	-0.04
e. Establishing student discipline procedures	854	34.4	1625	65.6	347	40.3	515	59.7	**	-0.05
f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent	1800	77.1	536	22.9	639	78.4	176	21.6		-0.01
g. The selection of teachers new to this school	1640	69.7	713	30.3	608	74.5	208	25.5	**	-0.05
h. School improvement planning	554	22.8	1877	77.2	249	29.4	598	70.6	***	-0.07

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Research Question 6. To what extent are these perceptions of leadership roles moderated by elementary and middle school teachers' years of experience and by their years of experience at their schools?

As tends to be the case with other occupations, both elementary and middle school teachers with more on-the-job experience and longer tenure with an institution are inclined to have more discretion afforded to them as they carry out their assignments. Thus, as shown in Table 11, with respect to total years teaching, elementary school respondents with more than 10 years of experience did indeed perceive themselves to have a substantially larger role than less experienced elementary school respondents with respect to five of the eight decision making areas that were asked about: specifically, “selecting instructional materials and resources” ($\chi^2(1) = 6.82, p = .009, \phi = 0.05$), “determining the content of in-service professional development programs” ($\chi^2(1) = 11.44, p = .001, \phi = 0.07$), “providing input on how the school budget will be spent” ($\chi^2(1) = 6.94, p = .008, \phi = 0.06$), “the selection of teachers new to this school” ($\chi^2(1) = 10.93, p = .001, \phi = 0.07$), and “school improvement planning” ($\chi^2(1) = 12.96, p < .001, \phi = 0.07$). An interesting exception to this trend concerned “setting grading and student assessment practices” whereby the discretionary scope perceived by less elementary experienced teachers was viewed as somewhat more far-reaching than that perceived by their more experienced counterparts ($\chi^2(1) = 6.09, p = .014, \phi = -0.05$). For this item, some 64% of the less experienced elementary teachers perceived themselves to have a moderate to large role in setting assessment practices compared to some 59% of the more experienced elementary teachers.

Table 11

Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages, for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teachers' Leadership Roles in Decision Making at the Elementary Level by Overall Years of Experience

Decision-Making Area (Elementary)	<u>One to 10 Years</u>				<u>More than 10 years</u>				ϕ	
	No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role		No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
a. Selecting instructional materials and resources	374	42.1	514	57.9	560	36.7	964	63.3	**	0.05
b. Devising teaching techniques	188	20.4	733	79.6	343	22.4	1189	77.6		-0.02
c. Setting grading and student assessment practices	329	36.2	580	63.8	631	41.2	899	58.8	*	-0.05
d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs	490	55.2	397	44.8	738	48.1	796	51.9	**	0.07
e. Establishing student discipline procedures	331	35.9	592	64.1	520	33.5	1031	66.5		0.02
f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent	676	80.1	168	19.9	1120	75.3	367	24.7	**	0.05
g. The selection of teachers new to this school	628	73.8	223	26.2	1007	67.3	490	32.7	***	0.07
h. School improvement planning	241	26.8	657	73.2	313	20.5	1215	79.5	***	0.07

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

At the middle school level, statistically significant differences in the scope of teachers' perceived decisions-making role were less often observed by years of experience and outcomes by years of experience did not consistently trend in one direction. As shown in Table 12, especially pronounced and linked to two of the largest effect sizes seen in this study were results pertinent to “determining the content of in-service professional development programs” ($\chi^2(1) = 11.51, p = .001, \phi = 0.12$), and “school improvement planning” ($\chi^2(1) = 11.71, p = .001, \phi = 0.12$). With respect to professional development concerns, nearly 11% more of the more experienced middle level teachers indicated that their leadership role was moderate to large compared to their counterparts with fewer years of experience. Outcomes were similar with respect to school improvement planning, with over 11% more of the more experienced teachers indicating a larger decision making role than their less experienced counterparts. Two additional leadership domains in which middle level teachers differed as to their self-assessed level of discretion and influence were “selecting instructional materials and resources” ($\chi^2(1) = 3.14, p = .076, \phi = 0.06$) and “providing input on how the school budget will be spent” ($\chi^2(1) = 3.43, p = .064, \phi = 0.06$), with both of these differences marginally favoring the more experienced group.

Table 12
Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages, for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teachers' Leadership Roles in Decision Making at the Middle Level by Overall Years of Experience

Decision-Making Area (Middle)	<u>One to 10 Years</u>				<u>More than 10 years</u>				ϕ	
	No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role		No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
a. Selecting instructional materials and resources	181	39.9	273	60.1	130	33.7	256	66.3	†	0.06
b. Devising teaching techniques	77	16.6	386	83.4	68	17.7	317	82.3		-0.01
c. Setting grading and student assessment practices	136	29.1	332	70.9	131	34.1	253	65.9		-0.05
d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs	276	61.1	176	38.9	188	49.3	193	50.7	***	0.12
e. Establishing student discipline procedures	191	40.9	276	59.1	155	39.5	237	60.5		0.01
f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent	355	80.7	85	19.3	281	75.5	91	24.5	†	0.06
g. The selection of teachers new to this school	331	74.2	115	25.8	275	74.9	92	25.1		-0.01
h. School improvement planning	158	34.4	301	65.6	91	23.6	294	76.4	***	0.12

† $p < .10$. *** $p < .001$.

Finally, as Table 13 shows, at 63%; 52%, and 82%, respectively, elementary teachers with more than six years' tenure at their present school perceived themselves to have a significantly larger role in decision making with respect to "selecting instructional materials and resources," ($\chi^2(1) = 2.71, p = .100, \phi = 0.03$), "determining the content of in-service professional development programs" ($\chi^2(1) = 6.62, p = .010, \phi = 0.05$) and "school improvement planning" ($\chi^2(1) = 27.97, p < .001, \phi = 0.11$), than their counterparts with six or fewer years. While all three of these percentage differences favored the teachers with more "time on the job," one difference, as before, favored those teachers with less time: specifically, "setting grading and student assessment practices" ($\chi^2(1) = 7.36, p = .007, \phi = -.06$). For this item, some 63% of elementary teachers with six or fewer years' experience at their present school perceived themselves to have a moderate to large influence on student assessment compared to approximately 57% of those with more years of experience.

As regards the perceptions of middle level teachers shown in Table 14, only one leadership issue appeared to be mediated by tenure. Whereas a considerable percentage of teachers with six or fewer years of service at the school perceived themselves to have a large to moderate role in "school improvement planning" (69%), that percentage was exceeded by 8% of teachers in-service for more than six years at their present location ($\chi^2(1) = 5.54, p = .019, \phi = -.08$).

Table 13

Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages, for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teachers' Leadership Roles in Decision Making at the Elementary Level by Years of Experience at Present School

Decision-Making Area (Elementary)	<u>One to Six Years</u>				<u>More than Six years</u>				ϕ	
	No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role		No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
a. Selecting instructional materials and resources	454	40.9	656	59.1	443	37.5	737	62.5	†	0.03
b. Devising teaching techniques	244	21.4	896	78.6	265	22.3	926	77.7		-0.01
c. Setting grading and student assessment practices	421	37.2	710	62.8	507	42.7	679	57.3	**	-0.06
d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs	599	54.1	508	45.9	579	48.7	609	51.3	*	0.05
e. Establishing student discipline procedures	416	36.2	732	63.8	396	33.1	802	66.9		0.03
f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent	828	78.5	227	21.5	886	76.6	271	23.4		0.02
g. The selection of teachers new to this school	755	71.0	309	29.0	801	68.9	362	31.1		0.02
h. School improvement planning	306	27.6	802	72.4	219	18.4	974	81.6	***	0.11

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 14

Comparison of Frequencies and Percentages, for Items Concerning Perceptions of Teachers' Leadership Roles in Decision Making at the Middle Level by Years of Experience at Present School

Decision-Making Area (Middle)	<u>One to Six Years</u>				<u>More than Six years</u>				ϕ
	No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role		No/ Small Role		Moderate/ Large Role		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
a. Selecting instructional materials and resources	204	37.6	339	62.4	92	35.2	169	64.8	0.02
b. Devising teaching techniques	90	16.3	462	83.7	43	16.6	216	83.4	0.00
c. Setting grading and student assessment practices	167	30.0	390	70.0	85	32.8	174	67.2	-0.03
d. Determining the content of in-service professional development programs	308	57.0	232	43.0	134	52.1	123	47.9	0.05
e. Establishing student discipline procedures	216	38.8	341	61.2	113	42.5	153	57.5	-0.04
f. Providing input on how the school budget will be spent	417	80.0	104	20.0	194	75.8	62	24.2	0.05
g. The selection of teachers new to this school	393	75.1	130	24.9	186	72.9	69	27.1	0.02
h. School improvement planning	172	31.4	376	68.6	61	23.4	200	76.6	* 0.08

* $p < .05$.

Summary

With respect to their perceived leadership status, elementary and middle school teachers differed only in their assessment of the effectiveness of teacher leadership at their institutions, with elementary teachers offering statistically significant but only slightly more positive ratings than their middle-level counterparts. In examining the perceptions of subgroups of elementary and middle school teachers, teachers' years of experience and their tenure at the school were both observed to mediate their responses to particular teacher leadership items but the effects were small and not directionally consistent. Much more frequent, however, were statistically significant differences in the size of the role that elementary and middle school teachers perceived they played in school decision making. While more middle-level than elementary level teachers held that their role was moderate to large in decisions involving devising teaching techniques and setting grading and student assessment practices, more elementary than middle school teachers claimed a substantial level of influence with respect to such matters as the content of professional development, student discipline procedures, the selection of teachers new to this school, and school improvement planning. Analyses of these decision making issues, by subgroups of teachers, indicated that, at both levels of schooling, more years of experience and longer tenure at a school tended to interact with the level of schooling and to expand the teacher's perceived role. Consistently evidencing the most robust effects by experience and tenure was teachers' perceived level of involvement in school improvement planning,

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers regarding their involvement in teacher leadership and decision making in their schools. By obtaining data from the secondary analysis of the section on teacher leadership and decision making data contained in The Measures of Effective Teaching Working Conditions Survey (MET) instrument, the investigator gained insight into the responses of the elementary and middle school teachers concerning the positive and negative perceptions they had regarding their involvement in teacher leadership and the extent of their roles in decision making. . The study explored and investigated the ideas generated from the responses of the teachers to address the six research question as stated previously.

The first three research questions examined the responses of the elementary and middle school teachers to determine their perceptions of how they were being treated as teacher leaders and the second three research questions examined the teachers' perceptions of the size of their role in making decisions. According to the data results about perceptions of teacher leadership, the highest level of agreement for both elementary and middle school teachers was shown for teachers are relied upon. Regarding statements about teacher leadership status and the perceptions of being treated as teacher leaders at their schools, elementary and middle school teachers differed only in the assessment of the effectiveness of teacher leadership at this institution while elementary teachers offered slightly significant but only slightly more positive ratings

than did their middle school counterparts. When examining subgroups of elementary and middle school teachers by years of experience and by tenure at their schools, the elementary and middle school teachers were observed to mediate their responses to particular leadership items, however, the effects were small and not directionally consistent. More frequently, the responses were significantly different in the size of the role that elementary and middle school teachers perceived they had in school decision making. More middle school teachers than did elementary teachers, held that their role is moderate to large in making decisions regarding devising teaching techniques, and in setting grading and student assessment practices. More elementary teachers than middle school teachers claimed a substantive level of influence with respect to such matters of content of professional development, student discipline procedure, the selection of the teachers new to this school and school improvement planning. The analyses of decision making issues by subgroups of teachers indicated that, at both levels of schools, elementary and middle, more years of experience and longer tenure at a school, tended to interact with the level of schooling and to expand the teachers' perceived role. Consistently evidencing the most robust effects by experience and tenure was teachers' perceived level of involvement in school improvement planning.

Findings

Research Question 1: To what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive they are being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?

Table 3 presented the frequencies and percentages for the seven teacher leadership items by respondent level of disagreement and agreement, along with item-level means and standard deviations for all respondents and by respondents' educational

level as elementary and middle school teachers. The outcomes suggest generally positive responses to these items with little differences in the item means observed for the subgroups of elementary and middle teachers by level. Most of the total responses varied around a mean of 3.0. The total respondents also generally agreed that teachers were effective as leaders. Smylie and Denny, (1990) agree that the concept of teacher leadership suggests that teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the ways schools should operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning. That is to say, the recognition of teacher leadership stems in part, from new understandings about organizational development and leadership that suggest active involvement by individuals at all levels and within all domains of an organization (Ogawa & Bosset, 1995; Spillane et al., 2001).

Research Question 2: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers at the elementary school level differ from the teachers at the middle school level regarding being treated as teacher leaders at their schools?

As displayed in Table 4, examination of the four cells containing frequencies and percentages created by collapsing respondent levels of agreement and disagreement with the item into two response categories and then crossing those responses with the respondents' status as an elementary or middle level teacher, the results indicated no statistically significant relationship between the two dimensions except for the item concerning "teachers being effective leaders at this school". The results are consistent with what was determined regarding the item in *Research Question 1*. It is possible that this difference occurs because the middle school teachers do not perceive themselves as highly as the elementary teachers due to isolation or lack of common collaborative time.

According to Harris (2003), the school context must be one that promotes collaboration and shared leadership in order for teacher leadership to be successful. The researchers, Angelle and DeHart (2011), conclude that there is a need for further research on the use of common planning time and teacher agency during periods set aside for collaboration. Moreover, these findings may speak to context and culture of leadership within the particular organization (Marzano, 2003). The responses could also imply that the middle level teachers need more engagement in leadership and decision making activities. A study by Rice and Schnieder (1994), noted the positive effects of teachers' influence in decision making. The teachers perceived levels of influence were positively correlated with their reported levels of decision involvement, interests in decision issues and job satisfaction. Similarly, the research brief for the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey reports that at the middle school level, the role of teachers in making decisions was significant in explaining teacher turnover. The middle level teachers in lower turnover schools were significantly more likely to play a larger role in making various decisions, thus, the importance of involving them in decision making outside of their classrooms.

Research Question 3: Within the elementary and middle school levels, to what extent, if any, are the perceptions of teachers regarding their treatment as leaders moderated by their total years of experience at the school?

The results pertinent to subgroups of elementary teachers are presented in Tables 5 and 7 while the results pertinent to subgroups of middle-level teachers are respectively presented in Tables 6 and 8. For each of these items, the level of agreement expressed for elementary teachers with more tenure tended to exceed the results observed for

elementary teachers with less tenure. At the middle level the agreement expressed by the middle school teachers with less tenure tended to exceed the agreement expressed by their more experienced counterparts. The research study by Angelle and DeHart (2007) asserts similarly to the findings observed in this study. They posit that as education generalist, elementary teachers have many roles beyond the teaching of core subject matter, thus, any leadership activities outside of the regular classroom may be perceived as “extra”. Moreover, these findings could again speak to the issues of school context and culture. As mentioned earlier, examining school culture in light of the shared norms and behavior is necessary to understand the beliefs and actions of teachers within an organization. The research recommends that principal leaders who support conditions of collaboration may promote the leadership skills and dispositions of teachers who might not be inclined to step up and lead. (Harris, 2001).

Research Question 4: Across the eight areas of educational decision making, to what extent do elementary and middle school teachers perceive themselves as taking on leadership roles in their schools?

As shown in Table 9, the elementary and middle school teachers’ level of agreement with respect to items concerning their being treated as leaders way systematically high, however, much more variability was observed in their responses when they were asked about the degree to which they played leadership roles in making eight kinds of decisions at their schools for items a through h. Slightly over half of all the responding teachers seem to feel that they were, to some extent, bystanders with some holding their role to be small at best. Perhaps the reasons for the variations in the perceptions of the elementary and middle school teachers regarding their perceptions of

being treated as teacher leaders, lies in absence of the expanded roles of teacher leadership and the increased recognition that these expanded roles might make in improving schools (Smylie & Denny, 1990). The recognition and implementation of teacher leadership stems from new understandings about organizational development and leadership that suggest the active involvement by individuals within all domains of the school (Ogawa & Bossett, 1995; Spillane et al., 2011).

Research Question 5: To what extent do the perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions differ regarding their leadership roles?

As shown in Table 10, the responses observed for the elementary and middle school teachers were consistent with the diversity of opinions observed across the sample. There were numerous differences about the scope of teachers' discretion observed within the sample by school level at which the respondent taught. The middle school teachers perceived themselves as having substantial roles in for items, b and c, conversely, the elementary teachers perceived their level of discretion to be greater than that of their middle school counterparts with respect to items d, e, f, and h. The smallest percentage of difference in the size of the role by schooling level was seen for item d, favoring the elementary teachers who perceived a moderate/large role at (49.2%) as opposed to the middle teachers who agreed at (44.3%). The largest difference perceived between the elementary and middle school teachers was observed for item h with the elementary teachers perceiving a moderate/large role at (77.2%) and the middle level teacher perceiving a moderate/large role at (70.6%).

Perhaps the variation in the positive perception for leadership involvement on the part of middle level teachers lies in the context of the school setting and their

opportunities for collaboration and involvement. According to the research of Wells and Feun (2007), the basic framework for initiating the process of changing the school organization into a learning community would include, among other things, breaking the pattern of teacher isolation and embedding collaboration in the work culture. The literature is filled with assertions that middle level teacher often work in their individual classrooms with little time to interact and connect with other adults in the larger school setting (Combs & Whitaker, 1999). Further, Marzano (2003) posits that teachers who felt empowered to make decisions about their classrooms and the larger school context have positive views of their own school, the leader and their involvement.

Research Question 6: To what extent are these perceptions of leadership roles moderated by elementary and middle school teachers according to their years of experience and their years of experience at their schools?

As often reported in other occupations, both elementary and middle school teachers with more on the job experience and longer tenure at their place of work are inclined to have more discretion afforded to them as they carry out their assignments. As shown in Table 11, with respect to total years teaching, elementary school respondents with more than ten years of experience perceive themselves to have a substantially larger role than the less experienced elementary school respondents with respect to five of the eight decision making areas that were asked about (items, a, d, f, g, and h). An interesting “exception” to this trend concerned item c, whereby the discretionary scope perceived by the less experienced elementary teachers was viewed as somewhat more far-reaching than that perceived by their more experienced counterparts. For this item, the

less experienced elementary teachers perceived themselves to have a moderate to large role in item (c) compared to the more experienced elementary teachers.

At the middle school level, statistically significant differences in the scope of teachers' perceived decision making role were less often observed by years of experience and outcomes by years of experience did not consistently trend in one direction. As shown in Table 12, especially pronounced and linked to two of the largest effect sizes seen in this study were results pertinent to item (d) and item (h). With respect to professional development concerns item (d), nearly 11% more of the more experienced middle level teachers indicated that their leadership role was moderate to large compared to their counterparts with fewer years of experience. Outcomes were similar with respect to school improvement planning, item (h), with over 11% more of the more experienced teachers indicating a larger decision making role than their less experienced counterparts. Two additional leadership domains in which middle level teachers differed as to their self-assessed level of discretion and influence were items (a and f). With both of these differences marginally favoring the more experienced group. Perhaps in support of the previous results, the research of York-Barr and Duke (2004), posits that individuals who function as teacher leaders are reported to have a solid foundation of teaching experience and expertise. Opportunities for leadership seem to grow out of success in the classroom and though not explicitly stated, many leadership factors imply that teacher leadership is best suited for teachers in mid-career assuming that such teachers also demonstrate high levels of competencies as expected for the more experienced teachers (Katzenmyer & Moller, 2001).

Finally, as Table 13 shows that elementary teachers with more than six years of tenure at their school perceive themselves to have a significantly larger role in decision making for items, (a, d, and h) than did their counterparts with less than six or more years of experience. One difference as before, favored these teachers with less time, specifically for item, (c). As shown in Table 14, only one leadership issue appeared to be mediated by tenure. The teachers with more than six years at their present school perceived themselves to have a large to moderate role in item (h). In conclusion, elementary and middle school teachers differed only in their assessment of the effectiveness of teacher leadership at their institutions with elementary teachers offering statistically significant but only slightly more positive ratings than their middle level counterparts. More frequently, however, were the statistically significant differences in the size of the role that elementary and middle school teachers perceived they played in school decision making. The analysis of the decision making issues by sub-groups of teachers, indicated that, at both levels of schooling, more years of experience and longer tenure at a school tended to interact with the level of schooling and to expand the teachers' perceived role. Consistently evidencing the most robust effects by experience and tenure was the teachers' perceived level of involvement in school improvement planning, item (h).

Discussion

This investigation attempted to develop a better understanding of the teacher perceptions concerning their beliefs of what teacher leadership should look like and what they perceived to be the reality in their schools. The teacher responses to the items on the Teacher leadership section of the MET survey were mostly positive. However, there

were a few discrepancies between the elementary and middle school teachers. In this study, there were no substantial differences in the perceptions of elementary and middle school teachers. There were, however, variations on their perceptions of the size of their roles in decision making. While these discrepancies were not very significant, the perceptions should be acknowledged and appropriately addressed by principals, districts and policy makers. This investigation attempted to explore teachers' perception of their role in decision making and teacher leadership.

Multiple studies on school leadership have noted the importance of teachers as leaders in school improvement (Harris 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Murphy, 2005; & Spillane, 2006). Although many studies on teacher leadership exists, perceptions of teacher leadership, by teachers themselves, have largely been lacking in the literature. The researchers, Angelle and DeHart (2011) assert that researchers have generally failed to examine differences in the perceptions of teacher leadership by “those who practice the concept, particularly as the extent of this practice pertains to school level (i.e., elementary, middle, and high.” (p. 142). It is helpful to understand any differences in perceptions among the elementary and middle school teachers. The implications of this study along with others can 1) inform a larger vision for implementing new school organizational strategies, 2) promote more awareness of the changes needed in school culture, and 3) influence policy perspectives on teacher leadership.

As a result of this secondary analysis of teacher leadership and decision making responses on the 2010 *Measures of Effective Teaching and Working Conditions Survey*, this investigator asserts that elementary teachers are far more optimistic about their

involvement in teacher leadership and decision making when compared to their middle school counterparts. Future researchers should investigate the reasons for this assertion. The responses to the various items indicate that the less-experienced teachers in both elementary and middle schools are more likely to report that they are involved in collaboration and planning. However, there is a void in responses from this same cohort on involvement in other areas of decision making and leadership. Therefore, greater attention should be given to getting less-experienced teachers involved. It is also noticeable that teachers with more years of experience overall and more years of experience at a present school, tend to respond more alike than compared to teachers with less experience. The less-experienced teachers' responses indicate that they are more concerned with procedures for collaboration versus leadership recognition. Overall, the perceptions of teacher leadership and decision making varied by experience levels and tenure at present school.

Changes in expectations for teachers' roles have been increasingly prevalent over the two decades of educational reform that led to the high-stakes accountability climate that teachers now face with the ratification of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 2001; the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and the Race to the Top. As mentioned earlier, teachers' work has increased, intensified and expanded in response to federal, state and local policies aimed at raising student achievement. Those high-stakes policy directives promote an environment of role ambiguity and superficial responses to administrative goals. The investigator in this study advocates that more research needs to be done on the relationships among external policies, workplace cultures and teacher roles. Due to the fact that educational policy is mediated not just by individual teachers but also by

school organizations, there is a need to better understand how organizational factors affect teacher roles. Based on some previous research, as well as on new theoretical models of school organizations, mediation is likely to be complex and varied (Gamoran, et al., 2003).

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of their leadership and participation in decision making within their schools and the extent to which they are being treated as teacher leaders. This study also explored the distributed leadership model as a model that may address the current dissatisfaction with leadership models that focus on the principal as the center of knowledge, expertise, power and authority. The study examined the idea of distributed leadership evolving from the collaboration of teachers working in professional learning communities and has implications for future leadership in schools. It is apparent to this investigator that the elementary teachers in this study perceive themselves to be more involved in the teacher leadership and decision making items than their middle school counterparts. This finding should prompt further investigations into identifying and implementing working conditions that enable greater involvement in decision making for both elementary and middle school teachers.

The literature supports the notion that working conditions matter and practitioners should be aware of these conditions in order to retain the best teachers. It is well documented that effective teachers have a positive impact on student outcomes. Given the need for higher academic achievement, district leaders and policy makers should focus on working conditions that inspire teachers to adopt leadership roles. Future

researchers should pursue investigations of empirical evidence of the value of opportunities for teachers to learn, develop, lead and collaborate.

In light of the current era of reform efforts in some states, the current findings may be different because the teacher evaluation process has negated teacher tenure, career ladders and teacher bargaining units. Those elements have been replaced with a system and evaluation process that can be used to eliminate ineffective teachers. Teacher tenure is being replaced with a longer teacher tenure process which may not result in tenure or even guarantee teacher tenure. Teacher bargaining is also being affected by school boards having control over more working conditions with less input from teachers. It would be interesting to do a study looking at teacher participation in district leadership and decision making in the current educational reform environment.

Recommendations

Evidence of the need for teacher leadership and involvement in decision making continues to mount in the current literature. The evidence advocates that working conditions and teacher involvement in those conditions play an important part in teachers' career choices and in student learning. Future research would benefit from additional investigations of the social conditions of work which teacher surveys or audits of schooling infrastructure do not capture. Which factors of teacher leadership and decision making should teachers be involved in and which ones do they most want to be involved in?

As schools and districts introduce policies and practice that are meant to promote more collaboration and involvement in decision making among teachers, future research

could benefit from additional investigations about the differences in the motivation to lead among elementary and middle level teachers.

Certain elements of teacher perceptions in the area of teacher leadership roles and their discretionary involvement in decision making matter to teachers. Which of these elements are teachers more likely to be interested in, decisions that affect their classroom or decisions that affect the larger school context. Further investigations could inform districts and principals which of those elements are most important to teachers and the effects of such involvement on student achievement and the expansion of teacher leadership roles.

This study revealed that the more experienced teachers perceived larger role sizes and role discretion than is actually recognized as meaningful involvement. Future research could identify those perceptions and investigate those perceptions as they apply to elementary and middle level teachers for role assignment in such matters as school improvement planning and professional development. The findings regarding teacher perceptions of leadership by years of experience lead us to the need to support beginning and veteran teachers as they attempt to assume leadership through professional development. Future research could inform building principals regarding researched strategies for providing structure and organization change for teacher leaders in collaboration, sharing expertise and mutual use of school resources.

Conclusion

The concept of teacher leadership is evident throughout the literature. The literature suggests that teachers hold a central position in the ways schools operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning. According to Smylie and Denny (1990), this

is not a new concept, “what is new are increased recognitions of teacher leadership, visions of expanded teacher leadership roles and new hope for the contributions these expanded roles might make in improving schools” (p. 237). The literature is replete with reasons for advancing the concept and practice of teacher leadership. Among those reasons are: benefits of employee participation; expertise about teaching and learning; acknowledgement, opportunities, and rewards for accomplished teachers; and benefits to students (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The review of literature on school leadership indicates that schools can function differently from current leadership practices that have dominated the research. This difference, according to (Hart, 1999), concerns both who school leaders are and how leadership is exercised. These views throughout most of the 20th century are tied to structural, bureaucratic conceptions of schools as organizations (Bacharach & Mundell, 1995). New perspectives call for a broader distribution of leadership, one that evolves from a single person, role-oriented view, to a view of leadership that is shared among administrators, teachers and others.

At the core of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, and reauthorized by the *Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA)* are a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). This accountability for results has fallen mainly to principals and teachers. The accountability calls for an expansion of the roles of teachers and principals. A review of the current literature reveals that, teachers work has increased, intensified and expanded in response to the federal, state and local policies aimed at raising student achievement. In addition, to positing teacher roles as sets of

conflicting tasks, the literature identifies role theory that argues the idea that expectations for roles will differ cross time, situations and persons (Turner, 2001). This suggests, according to Turner, that individual's views about their own roles or roles of others can change.

Over the past decade, scholars have produced robust bodies of literature on the important characteristics of schools such as learning communities (DuFour, 2005), distributed leadership (Spillane et al., 2001), and teacher leadership (Danielson, 2006). The question remains, how do these school-based factors affect teacher role change? What kinds of other supports do schools give teachers to carry out and change role change expectations (York-Barr & Duke, 2004)? It would seem that educational policy is mediated not just by individual teachers but also by school organizations, their context and their culture (Turner, 2001). It is important, then, to investigate organizational factors that affect teacher roles.

After thorough examination of the current literature regarding the changing roles for principals and teachers, the investigator acknowledges the effect that the school principal has on student achievement, teaching and learning and on instituting the organizational structures that promote the expanded roles of teacher leadership. It would be difficult to ignore the increased expectations for both principals and teachers. The schools in which they work are changing due to the new accountability measures of the NCLB, complaints about the quality of education, labor market demands for increasingly skilled workers and the growing popularity of public school alternatives. In the midst of all the accompanying pressures, there is no doubt that schools for this new century require different forms of school leadership for principals and teachers. It is clear that the

top priority of the principalship, as it is currently constructed, fails to meet the new expectations for leadership. It is also relevant to the roles classroom teachers can perform to alleviate the myriad of expectations for one person leadership.

Smylie (1992) posits that increasing teacher involvement in decision making ranks among the most promising educational reform strategies, however, the empirical data about the conditions under which teachers will actually participate in that process are limited. In examining the literature, it is noted that merely establishing policies and procedures for teachers' participation in leadership not necessarily result in their participation as leaders on their part. It is suggested by Fullan (2006) that promoting teacher participation as a leader is a problem of individual and organizational change that cannot be solved effectively through legislation and regulation alone. Policy makers might best approach the problem of promoting teacher leadership and participation in decision making by designing and supporting professional learning and by developing approaches for teachers and principals to redefine their work roles and working relationships that are conducive to the new expectations of leadership.

The current state of affairs can be changed. The change, however, implies more than standards, accountability and rhetoric. Researchers cite that it means understanding in detail, how leaders and leadership teams bring effective influences to bear on teaching and learning issues while developing conditions of support for leadership practices that improvement of teaching and learning its goal. The concept of teacher leadership suggests that teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the ways schools operate and in the core functions of teaching and learning (Smylie & Denny, 1990).

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APPENDIX

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

Institutional Review Board

To: Virginia McNeil
Leadership

From: Chair or Designee, Institutional Review Board
For the Protection of Human Subjects
irb@memphis.edu

Subject: A Study of Kidergarten Through Eighth Grade Teachers Perceptions of
Teacher Leadership And School Level Decision Making (#2271)

Approval Date: June 25,2012

This is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has designated the above referenced protocol as exempt from the full federal regulations under category 4. This project was reviewed in accordance with all applicable statuses and regulations as well as ethical principles.

When the project is finished or terminated, please submit a Human Subjects Research Completion Form (COMP) to the Board via e-mail at irbforms@memphis.edu. This form can be obtained on our website at <http://www.memphis.edu/irb/forms.php>.

Approval for this protocol does not expire. However, any change to the protocol must be reviewed and approved by the board prior to implementing the change.

Chair or Designee, Institutional Review Board
The University of Memphis

Cc: Dr. Larry McNeal