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Building Administrator's Facilitation of Teacher Leadership: Moderators Associated with Teachers' Reported Levels of Empowerment

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The foundation for school leadership continues to evolve, and many schools are embracing a new mindset in which the "leadership in schools is no longer solely performed by the school principal; instead leadership is [viewed as] an aggregated function, and other members of the leadership team with formally designated leadership roles take part in leading the school" (Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpia, 2014, p. 212). Growing numbers of principals and assistant principals are feeling as if they cannot keep up with the daily management of the school building, and, at the same time, encounter pressure to embody the necessary skills requisite of being an expert in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Rice and Schneider (1994) noted that the "current educational reform movement strongly advocates increased teacher involvement in school decision-making" through empowerment models to help offset the growing demands being placed upon school administrators (p. 43). According to Prawat (1991), "work demands in education are thought to be rapidly increasing in complexity," requiring a greater need for shared decision-making and teacher empowerment (p. 749). Hatcher (2005) also noted, "in the school context it is argued that the work process has become much more 'complex and intensive, and [principals] are dependent on their teacher colleagues to implement mandated reforms" (p. 254). Therefore, there is a strong argument for the "importance of legitimate, authentic teacher involvement in decision-making" for the survival and sustainability of the nation's schools in the ever-changing environment of accountability (Rice & Schneider, 1994, p. 55).

Philosophy of Empowerment

School administrators need to become knowledgeable of what empowerment practices look like in the school environment in addition to the skills and behaviors this practice includes. This knowledge will then assist them in replicating such models of empowerment in their own districts in hopes of maximizing student achievement. As defined by Marks and Louis (1997), teacher empowerment is "an educational reform initiative that often accompanies policies to

increase decision-making authority and accountability at the school level" (p. 245). Hatcher (2005) proposed a slightly different view and proposed that empowerment is "the opportunity to exercise leadership [that] can be made available to the body of teachers within a school by creating a non-hierarchical network of collaborative learning" (p. 255). According to Devos et al. (2014), however, empowerment resides "where the leadership is distributed among all members of the leadership team and where teachers can participate in school decision-making" methods (p. 205). Empowerment, then, is a "dynamic, interactive influence process" comprised of the "concerted action of people working together … which brings about a situation in which the amount of energy created is greater than the sum of the individual actions" (Devos et al., 2014, pp. 208-209).

Empowerment and Trust

While the need for shared and collaborative leadership continues to grow alongside the influx of administrator and educator responsibilities, a paucity of research exists in the area of empowering teachers. Rinehart, Short, Short, and Eckley (1998) found that teacher empowerment is related to principals' social attractiveness or likeness, credibility, and trustworthiness. Their findings are consistent with other findings from Short and Greer (1997) who found trust to be a major element of initiating teacher empowerment. In order to empower teachers and develop collaborative leadership within school buildings, principals must first focus their efforts on establishing trusting relationships. Consistent with Rinehart et al. (1998), Short and Greer (1994), and Moye, Henkin, and Egley (2004) also found themes of relationships and trust to be a critical part of empowerment noting that "trust contributes to a positive working environment characterized by honest, supportive relationships" (p. 261).

Empowerment and Job Satisfaction

Not only is empowerment important for launching school change, it is relevant to several other aspects of organizational functioning and effectiveness. Bogler and Nir (2012) found teachers' levels of perceived empowerment to be a "key factor in affecting job satisfaction, both intrinsically and extrinsically" (p. 301). Many would argue that overall job satisfaction results in longer lasting and future contributions from the employee to the organization, benefiting all who are invested in making the most of change initiatives. The research supports such a claim. Dee, Henkin, and Duemer (2002) documented that "empowered teachers had a stronger affective attachment to the school organization" (p. 270). Teachers have a greater sense of belonging and commitment in those schools that put empowerment models into practice, often because they believe "that their input [is] valued since their recommendations [are] often followed" (White, 1992, p. 75). Devos et al. (2014) also found similar linkages between teacher empowerment and increased sense of commitment to the organization. Their study of 1,495 teachers from 46 secondary schools yielded results that indicated "teachers feel more committed to the school when the principal provides opportunities for the assistant principals and the teacher- leaders to perform leadership roles" (p. 225).

Empowerment has great potential for developing success within the organization, especially when it is personalized for employees. Effective means of "empowerment for the individual within organizational settings results from the internalization of a framework that is grounded in personal meaning and is responsive to the larger aims of the organization" (Culbert & McDonough, 1986, p. 186). In order for school principals to enact empowerment in such a way that is individualized and personalized for teachers, communication skills need to be greatly considered and reflected upon. "Communicating information openly with teachers is

fundamental in terms of enabling them to make responsible decisions" (Moye et al., 2005, p. 272).

Constraints and Limitations

As with any new philosophy or initiative in education, district leaders should be aware of the constraints and limitations associated with teacher empowerment prior to restructuring the decision-making process within their building. Despite the fact that some teachers have been empowered to handle increased responsibilities, they may "remain limited by the traditional patterns of authority where administrators are at the top of the hierarchy and teachers are at the bottom" (White, 1992, p. 81). As supported by results from the work of Devos et al. (2014), ultimately, it is the school principal who "strongly influences how leadership is distributed" (p. 220). Finding the time to meet the increase in expectations is another limitation, as teachers "[find] themselves spending more time on a broader variety of concerns than they had previously spent due to newly granted autonomy" (Seed, 2006, p. 43). Prior to an expansion of empowerment, teachers may be used to working more in isolation and not having to collaborate with or communicate their rationale for decisions with colleagues and administration. In their study of 24 schools throughout the country, Marks and Louis (1997) found limitations associated with teacher empowerment. Their findings demonstrated that time was a considerable factor and that participation in teacher empowerment models "may infringe on the discretionary time that teachers allocate for instruction-related activities, such as preparing for class or grading papers" (p. 250). In addition to Seed (2006), and Marks and Louis (1997), White (1992) also reported that time is a limitation associated with teacher empowerment models. In her over 100 personal interviews with teachers and administrators, she found that "the major constraints to teachers' input in school decision-making included limited time, training and funding" (p. 71).

Teachers can become drained given that "the hours are long, and the hats the teacher[s] wear are many" (p. 214).

Rationale for Further Study on Teacher Empowerment

The future of school success in embracing state and federal mandates may reside in the school leaders' ability to empower teachers. Understanding how to initiate and maximize teacher empowerment, however, is, yet, just one of many new concepts with which principals need to become familiar. Therefore, there is a critical need for extensive research to be completed in the area of teacher empowerment within the school setting to inform principals of best practice. Of concern for school leaders is that, currently, "little, if any, empirical evidence exists that describes the relationship between empowerment and principal characteristics that influence teachers to change their orientation and practices" (Rinehart et al., 1998, p. 634). Williams (2007) also argued that "researchers have not been conducting serious studies of what we might learn about the kinds of decisions teachers make when given the chance and what those decisions mean in terms of student achievement" in empowered environments (p. 216). What currently exists in the literature is only a "starting point to gather other measures of the interpersonal relationship between teachers and their principal" (Rinehart et al., 1986 p. 645).

The work in this area, then, must generate new data on teacher empowerment that can be added to the existing body of knowledge for practitioners of school leadership. Jackson and Marriott (2012) suggested that more research needs to be conducted on establishing teachers as leaders, so that principals can learn how to best strengthen empowerment and organizational relationships. Furthermore, Jackson and Marriott (2012) proposed expansion of data collection to focus on empowerment that results when "teachers and principals are engaged in conjoint activity" as a means to meet school outcomes (p. 236).

Principals already struggle to keep up with the daily duties and tasks of running a school. Embracing the changes of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), new technology assessments, transformed report cards, and state legislation greatly jeopardize principals' available time to provide support and guidance to teachers. Empowering teachers to take on leadership roles, and embrace responsibility for new challenges they did not previously possess, will allow for greater levels of empowerment, especially, because "empowered teachers believe that they have the skills and knowledge to act on a situation and improve it" (Rinehart et al., 1998, p. 635). "Principals who strive to raise teachers' commitment to the organization and to the profession", through an empowerment model, will reap benefits from teachers who feel a stronger sense of belonging, which could potentially lead into a trickledown effect that would pave the way for improvements in instruction and students' learning (Bogler & Somech, 2004, p. 286). Teacher empowerment more effectively provides for the completion of the multitude of tasks required of schools through a model that encourages cohesion and collaboration. "Empowerment may provide the conditions necessary to build organizational commitment," developing the endurance necessary for implementation of long-lasting change (Dee et al., 2002, p. 261). Setting the stage for dedication above and beyond traditionally expected responsibilities will be a major task of tomorrow's school leaders. Schools will need to provide a setting in which "principals and teachers reconceptualize roles and responsibilities" to ensure that all requirements are being addressed (Jackson & Marriott, 2012, p. 237). In order to make this evolution a smooth transition, researchers need to continue to add to the growing body of literature on teacher empowerment.

"As accountability and its associated daily practices permeate the work of school leaders worldwide," the need for shared leadership becomes glaringly apparent (Crum, Sherman, &

Myran, 2009, p. 48).   The question for administrators is how to best leverage their positions as influential leaders to lift and empower the teachers in their buildings to take on new tasks, share in the work load, and inspire others. Principals need to craft the philosophy that "a leader is not a leader simply because of a formal role" and to encourage teachers to take part in shared leadership for the overall benefit of the school (Jackson &Marriott, 2012, p. 235). "School leaders need to focus on various qualities of teacher empowerment" to more effectively enact change in their buildings and manage added stress associated with new initiatives (Bogler & Nir, 2012, p. 301). Teacher empowerment has the potential to positively impact the overall organization, according to Dee et al. (2002), who reported that "participation in administrative/governance teams and community-relations[*sic*] teams enhanced feelings of empowerment which, in turn, yielded higher levels of organizational commitment" (p. 270).   "If teachers are to be empowered and regarded as professionals, then, like other professionals, they must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students", which can only come from the release of control from school administrators (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006, p. 44). School principals need meaningful and practical steps, based on research, that they can put in place immediately to empower teachers and move forward in embracing new programs and protocol for change. The problem lies in the lack of information in the area of teacher empowerment, especially in the era of increased school accountability.

Although Bogler and Nir (2012), and Bogler and Somech (2004) conducted studies in Israel on the topic of teacher empowerment, the results may not be generalizable to the United States. The broader literature base, also, is not largely and equally representative of differing levels of education: elementary, middle, and high school. Many of the studies conducted on the topic of teacher empowerment are representative of elementary schools. The field needs more

research on teacher empowerment conducted at the middle and high school levels. The concept of empowering employees within the organization is a topic that is more widely studied in the business world, yet, "there has been little evidence of its existence in the educational realm" (Bogler & Nir, 2012, p. 291).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics and traits of individuals and buildings in which teacher empowerment is strongest, so that those schools and individuals can be further studied and emulated. An additional purpose of the study is to investigate the relationships between principals and school environment characteristics, and levels of teacher empowerment. It is hypothesized that those buildings that have only one building administrator will have higher levels of teacher empowerment as compared with buildings that have both a principal and assistant principal. Additionally, the opposite is hypothesized to be true for buildings with an assistant principal. Finally, it is hypothesized that buildings with male administrators will have higher levels of teacher empowerment than buildings with female administrators.

Significance of Study

This study will provide meaningful information to both teachers and educators as they develop plans to best implement new levels of change within their buildings and districts as a result of new legislation and local requirements. The increasing levels of accountability place greater demands on school officials who will need to rely on teachers to encourage others within the building to improve instructional practice and rigor as a means to generate higher student test scores. Through research in the area of teacher empowerment, educators will come to understand that "the positions of leaders and followers are dynamic as organizations engage in

the varied purposes and activities required to accomplish organizational goals" (Jackson & Marriott, 2012, p. 235). Several researchers, such as Bogler and Somech (2004), suggested that the literature be extended to studies that examine the effects variables have on the relationship between teacher empowerment and school related outcomes, prompting the realm of social science to look more closely at this influence process. As the area of study on teacher empowerment is a lacking topic in social science research, and, what little research that does exist is outdated and not applicable to a more modern role and view of school leadership, this study will reexamine the concept of teacher empowerment during a time in which new educational initiatives continue to accumulate.

Methods

The current investigation seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in the level of teacher empowerment experienced in school buildings with female administrators versus male administrators?

2. Is there a difference in the level of teacher empowerment experienced in school buildings with an assistant principal as compared to those buildings without an assistant principal?

3. Do male or female teachers feel more empowered?

4. How do levels of perceived empowerment differ depending on the building level (elementary, middle, or high school)?

5. Are stronger feelings of teacher empowerment experienced with principals of longer tenure?

6. What other variables moderate reported levels of empowerment (i.e., years of experience of teacher, existence of an assistant principal, and years of experience of assistant administrator)?

Participants

The teachers and principals of the nine school districts in a northeast county of Ohio were contacted to participate in the current investigation, after receiving approval of the school district's superintendent. Two school districts declined to participate. Respondents included teachers, building administrators, and central office administrators from school districts located in Lake County, Ohio. The size of the school districts varied. Of the 317 respondents, n=237 were female (74.53%) and n= 80 were male (24.53-%). Elementary school teachers were the highest representation with n=114 (35.85%) total respondents. The second highest representation of participants was middle school teachers with a total sample of n=79 respondents (24.84%). Only n=10 (3.13%) principals responded and n=6 (1.89%) holding central office positions.

Instrumentation

The School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) Plus was distributed to teachers and principals in all participating school districts in the selected county (Short &Rinehart, 1992). This 38-item instrument "measures an overall perception of empowerment" using a "5-point Likert-type scale" (Rinehart et al., 1998, p. 638). The SPES has been used by other researchers, such as Bogler and Nir (2012), Bogler and Somech (2004), and Rinehart et al. (1998), documenting its recognized credibility and widespread use in the field of social science research. The instrument was designed by Short and Rinehart (1992) to "assess several conceptually derived dimensions" of empowerment (p. 953). The SPES consists of 38 questions that can be categorized in six dimensions of teacher empowerment: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact (Short & Rinehart, 1992). A

copy of the SPES is available at http://education.missouri.edu/orgs/mllc/Upload%20Area-Docs/SPES%20SURVEY.pdf

Procedures

This quantitative study explored teachers' perceptions of their level of empowerment. With permission from the superintendents of the public schools in a small-sized, suburban school district, a questionnaire was distributed to teachers and principals through the use of Survey Monkey, an online survey and data collection tool. Data were collected from teachers and principals during a single school year.

Results

Demographic data revealed that 317 school employees were represented from seven school districts in Lake County, Ohio. Of the total respondents, 273 were teachers and 10 were building principals. The school district with the highest response rate was Painesville; 73 of its employees completed the survey, which totaled 22.96% of all responses received. The highest percentage of responses was received from elementary teachers totaling 114, or 35.85% of all responses. The majority of participants were females (n=237, 74.53%). These data were consistent with the national number of public school female educators compared with male educators, as NCES reports that 75.9% of the nation's teachers are female and 24.1% are male (NCES, 2015).

Sixty-three percent of respondents work in a building that has an assistant principal, while 106 (33.33%) reported that they work in a building with no assistant principal.   A greater number of respondents (n=169, 53.14%) work for a male principal, while 136 (42.77%) work for a female principal. Inversely, a larger proportion of respondents have a female assistant principal (n=101, 31.76%), as compared with n=83 (26.10%) who have a male assistant

principal. When reporting on years of experience, the greatest number of respondents noted that they have been working in the field for 11-15 years (n=69) 21.70%. Participants were asked how many years of experience their building principal has and the majority selected less than five years (n=106, 33.33%), followed by 94 respondents who selected the Don't Know option (29.56%). Respondents were also asked to select the number of years of experience for their assistant principal. The largest number of responses was also for five years or less (n=111, 34.91%).

Reliability analysis was used to measure the reliability of participants' responses for the six dimensions of the SPES. All of the reliability estimates met or exceeded minimally acceptable guidelines. The highest reliability estimate was found for Self-Efficacy factor (12 items, α = .89); the lowest reliability estimate was found for Professional Growth factor (4 items, α = .71).

Analysis of Research Questions

This investigation sought to answer six research questions. The SPES instrument was used to gather data to provide insight into each question's area of focus. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted in an effort to answer the first three research questions which looked at the six factors together, and separately, across whether the administrator and/or the assistant principal were male/female. In addition, the gender of the teacher participant was examined. The multivariate test asks the question across all six factors considered as one, but it isolates the overlap in the factors. Table 1 shows the results of the multivariate test.

Table 1.

Multivariate Analysis

Effect	f	df	Sig
Is your building principal male or female?	3.42	(6, 150)	.003*
Is your assistant principal male or female?	2.74	(6, 150)	.015*
Gender	.82	(6, 150)	.555
Is your building principal male or female by Participant Gender	.41	(6, 150)	.871
Is your assistant principal male or female by Participant Gender	.83	(6, 150)	.548

Based on the MANOVA examining all of the factors as if they represented a single factor of empowerment, the gender of the building principal, and the gender of the assistant principal both have a significant association with the level of empowerment reported. No significant differences were found for gender of participant, or interactions with gender of participants.

The between-subjects' effects analysis examines each factor separately across the same variables. Results indicate that the gender of the participant did not have an impact on the participants' reported level of empowerment across any of the factors. However, the level of empowerment on the factor of Status, $F(1, 163) = 7.58$, $p = .007$, and Impact, $F(1, 163) = 5.36$, $p = .022$, were significantly associated to the gender of the principal. Additionally, the level of empowerment on the factor of Self-Efficacy, $F(1, 163) = 4.97$, $p = .027$, was significantly associated with the gender of the participants' assistant principal. Specifically, participants with male principals had a higher reported level of Status empowerment ($M = 4.01$, $sd = 5.6$) compared to participants with female principals ($M = 3.91$, $sd = .60$). Participants with male principals had a higher reported level of Impact empowerment ($M = 3.48$, $sd = .63$) compared to

participants with female principals (M = 3.29, sd = .76). Participants with male, assistant principals had a higher reported level of Self-Efficacy empowerment (M = 4.31, sd = .41) compared to participants with female assistant principals (M = 4.15, sd = .44).   Further analysis of the interaction between participant gender and the principal or assistant principal gender revealed no significant interactions.

The fourth research question asked in which buildings (elementary, middle, or high schools) are levels of perceived empowerment greatest. This was considered by examining the impact of building level for each factor. Results indicate that the empowerment factor of Autonomy, $F_{(2,267)}$ =5.10, p = .007, was the only factor found to be significant associated with different building levels. Specifically, participants working in an elementary building had a higher reported level of Autonomy empowerment (M = 2.76, sd = 1.07) when compared to participants in a middle school (M = 2.29, sd = .93), and to those in a high school (M = 2.49, sd = 1.04).   No other factors were found to be significant.

The fifth research question examines whether stronger feelings of teacher empowerment were felt with principals of longer tenure? The factor of Professional Growth, $F_{(7, 272)}$ = 2.76, p = .041, was the only factor found to be significantly associated with length of principals' tenure. Specifically, participants with a principal of 6-10 years' experience had the highest reported level of Professional Growth empowerment (M = 3.98, sd = .56).

The last research question examines what other variables might moderate the level of reported empowerment. The variables examined for this analysis included (a) years of experience of teacher, (b) whether or not there is an assistant principal, and (c) the years of experience of the assistant principal.

Results indicate that no sub-factors were significantly associated with teachers' tenure. Secondly, whether or not there is an assistant principal in the building was examined across all the empowerment factor responses. The only factor found to be significantly associated with the presence of an assistant principal was the empowerment factor of Decision-Making, $F(1, 272) = 11.23$, $p = .001$. Lastly, the number of years of experience of the assistant principal was examined. The empowerment factors of Decision-Making, $F(10, 272) = 2.10$, $p = .025$, and Impact, $F(10, 270)$, $p = .041$, were significantly associated with the years of experience of the building assistant principal. Specifically, participants with an assistant principal of 11-15 years' experience had the highest reported level of Decision-Making empowerment ($M = 3.61$, $sd = .56$). Participants with an assistant principal of 6-10 years' experience had the highest reported level of Impact empowerment ($M = 3.57$, $sd = .41$).

Open-Ended Responses

The last six questions of the survey instrument were open-ended questions that invited participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions regarding their personal experiences with empowerment. The open-ended questions were as follows: (1) Describe what behaviors or actions your principal takes to make you and/or others in your building feel empowered?; (2) Tell about a time in which you were empowered to take part in a decision-making process for your current school or district; (3) In your opinion what are the benefits to empowering teachers?; (4) In your opinion, what are the benefits to being empowered as a teacher to take on more leadership responsibilities?; (5) What incentives would motivate you as a teacher to take on additional roles or job responsibilities?; and (6) What barriers (if any) prevent teachers from taking on additional responsibilities or a leadership role? Participants' responses were analyzed and grouped by common themes and trends.

When considering actions that the principal has taken to make teachers feel

empowered, many participants reported that their principal allowed them to make decisions

and/or solicited their input. The second question asked respondents to describe a time in which

they felt empowered. Several responses for this question focused on being involved in group or

committee work, or in the hiring process of new employees. The next open-ended question

probed into respondents' thoughts on the benefits to empowering teachers. Participants shared

comments that largely focused on common trends of increased motivation, increased

performance and productivity of teachers, and creating a stronger sense of ownership. The

fourth open-ended question asked participants what they felt the benefits to being an

empowered teacher include. The most common answer to this question centered on

developing the feelings of being respected and valued. The next question in the series asked

participants to comment on incentives that would motivate a teacher to take on more

responsibilities. The most frequently reported answers for this question were specific to extra

time, compensation, and gaining respect and recognition. The final open-ended question

focused on the barriers that prevent teachers from taking on additional responsibilities. The

most common responses for this question cited time, money, and existing family and personal

commitments.

Discussion

The job of the public school principal is quickly changing. More, and increasingly higher

demands, are placed upon these school leaders with each passing year. Federal, state, and

local mandates require more attention, energy, and focus of principals than ever before. In

order to meet the demands and requirements they are faced with, principals need to empower

teacher-leaders within their buildings to take on some of these additional responsibilities and roles.

Research questions one and three both pertained to the concept of gender as it relates to perceived levels of teacher empowerment. The first research question sought to uncover if a difference in the level of teacher empowerment exists with a male principal versus a female principal. The third research question asked whether male or female teachers feel more empowered. The current investigation found that the gender of the participant did not have an impact on the level of empowerment reported by teachers across any of the factors. However, the data indicate that gender of both the building principal and the assistant principal have a significant association with a teacher's reported level of empowerment. Empowerment factors of Status and Impact were associated with the gender of the principal, while the factor of Self-Efficacy was associated with the gender of the assistant principal. This data are inconsistent with other, existing, known research on the subject of teachers' perceptions of empowerment. In their study of teachers' perceptions of use of "empowering-type activities" by the building principal, LoVette, Holland, and McCall (1999) reported that, when considering the gender of the building principal, "no significant difference between the two groups was found" (p. 10). Chen and Addi (1992), however, found that the gender of the principal is related to teacher empowerment and indicated that "teachers' professional rank and their job seniority are directly related to their principal's gender" (p. 7). Chen and Addi (1992) went on to report that even more specifically, "female teachers under male principals have the highest professional rank" (p. 7). These conflicting results show that there is need for more in-depth research on the topic of principals' gender as it relates to empowering teachers with more and greater responsibilities in the workplace.

The second research question in the current investigation considered whether empowerment levels for teachers were higher in buildings that have an assistant principal versus buildings that do not have an assistant. Teachers' perceived levels of the empowerment factor of Self-Efficacy were significantly related to the presence of an assistant principal in the school building. This finding has great implications for the continued employment of the assistant principal position. As more and more districts are faced with budget cuts and financial constraints, often the position of assistant principal is eliminated in an effort to save costs.

The presence of an assistant principal can empower teachers to increase feelings of self-efficacy, which would in turn lead to an overall greater sense of happiness and productivity in the work place. Literature on assistant principals and their association with teacher empowerment is scarce. This may be due to the notion that most assistant principals spend the greater portion of their day handling student discipline over facilitating teachers. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) recognizes this reality of the assistant principal role as it reports that "assistant principals are often delegated the management tasks that inhibit their likelihood of being involved in a meaningful way with the instruction program" (Katz, Allen, Fairchild, Fultz, & Grossenbacher, n.d., para. 2).

The third research question asked at which building level, elementary, middle, or high, were levels of empowerment highest. The empowerment factor of Autonomy was the only element that was found to be significant across the building levels. This finding is consistent with existing research. LoVette et al. (1999) studied if "principals of elementary schools [were] perceived as providing more empowering-type activities than junior high/middle school or high schools [*sic*]" (p. 10). They concluded that "no significant differences were noted" across the three building levels. A possible explanation for finding is that school administrators complete

the same university training programs for school leadership and administration regardless of which building level they seek employment in as a school principal. What needs to be studied further are the building dynamics for elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as any existing personality types of teachers associated with each level, so that principals and assistant principals can know which strategies for empowerment work best with various populations of teachers.

The next question was designed to explore if teachers feel more empowerment with principals of longer tenure. The empowerment factor of Professional Growth was associated with length of principals' tenure. This finding likely relates to the concept that, principals of longer tenure, value and respect teachers' individual choices and needs for quality professional growth opportunities. Experienced principals are often likely to support teachers in their efforts to grow and develop professionally by allowing them to attend conferences and workshops. Additionally, experienced principals may more often believe, that, in order to help struggling teachers improve in both the areas of teacher and student performance, as measured by teacher evaluations and student growth measures, they need to be immersed in quality teacher-development programs and workshops. This finding can also be supported by the idea that principals of longer tenure understand that in order for empowerment to exist, they "have to earn trust" (Whitaker & Moses, 1990, p. 129). These long-standing principals know and believe that "the empowerment of teachers will not come easily or quickly […as] many teachers are skeptical about the motives and sincerity of administrators" (Whitaker & Moses, p. 129).

The final research question of the current investigation examined what other variables might moderate the level of reported empowerment. The variables examined for this analysis included years of experience of teachers, and the years of experience of the assistant principal.

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The findings indicated that none of the factors for empowerment were associated with length of teachers' tenure. This may be due to the fact that all teachers, regardless of length of career, feel overworked and inundated with too many professional and family commitments and they are hesitant to take on additional responsibilities in the workplace.

The final portion of the last research question considered whether the number of years of experience of the assistant principal was related to any of the factors of empowerment. The factors of Decision-Making and Impact were both associated with years of experience of the building assistant principal. Assistant principals are likely to see their role as one that assists and helps the principal of the building, in addition to the teachers and students in the school. Assistant principals are often eager to please and help make the jobs of others in the school building easier. Working alongside teachers, to assist in the decision-making processes through an empowerment model, is practice that is likely to be demonstrated by assistant principals who have a longer tenure. These experienced assistants have been immersed in the culture long enough to know how to support both teachers and principals and to help make the building run efficiently. When this synergy occurs, empowered teachers feel as if an impact has been made.

Open-Ended Responses

The open-ended questions at the end of the survey provided further insight into teachers' thoughts and perceptions regarding empowerment. In these opportunities to respond openly, teachers shared their thoughts regarding the many positive aspects of empowerment for individual teachers. For example, one teacher reported that "empowered teachers work in a more invigorated way." Another respondent stated that empowered teachers "have a more positive attitude, less stress and have a greater impact on student learning." Some teachers

noted the positive effects empowering teachers can have in the overall organization. For example, one teacher reported that "teachers who involve themselves in leadership opportunities learn more about the organizational nature of schools and are likely to be more sympathetic to administrative decisions that do not need to be made centrally."

Empowering teachers does not come without encountering barriers. When responding to open-ended questions, participants reported multiple reasons for why they do not take on additional responsibilities. The most common themes that emerged from these answers included not having enough time and not receiving additional compensation for extra duties. Some participants also cited family and personal commitments as a factor in not wanting to be empowered in the work setting. One teacher replied by stating, "quit asking us to take more and more time away from our own families for no extra money." Feelings of frustration could also be heard in some responses regarding barriers to empowerment. One participant remarked that

> teachers are hesitant to take on additional responsibilities and leadership roles because they are not being monetarily compensated for the extended amount of time that is required above their 40 hour [*sic*] work week…[additionally,] teachers may feel overwhelmed at figuring out OTES, doing their lesson planning, differentiation, and implementing brand new literacy programs. These already high expectations for their schedules make additional responsibilities seem daunting and almost impossible.

Participants were also asked what would motivate them to take on additional roles in the workplace. The open-ended responses were analyzed for themes and the most popular answers included time, compensation, and respect/recognition. One respondent suggested that "thank yous, public recognition, and staff appreciation incentives are very rewarding and

motivating" for encouraging teachers to take on additional responsibilities. Time and money were both found to be incentives to taking on additional leadership roles, and the barriers to not embracing additional responsibilities. School leaders, therefore, need to work collaboratively to look at pay schedules that could offer teachers additional compensation for extra duties. Flexibly scheduling teachers, or offering them opportunities to teach fewer periods during a day, could incentivize them to assume more administrative responsibilities.

The open-ended responses showed that participants see great benefit to the act of empowering teachers. This finding lends itself to the greater potential for this act of leadership within the school setting. Therefore, future research on ways to increase and enhance the behaviors of principals to empower teacher-leaders should be conducted to generate a more influential impact in teaching and learning environments. There are several barriers to consider when trying to empower teachers, however. These barriers were cited by many participants in their open-ended responses. Future research in the area of teacher empowerment should focus on investigating what the barriers for female and male teachers include. The open-ended questions in this investigation asked participants to describe what motivates teachers to take on additional leadership responsibilities. Future quantitative studies, measuring the amount of increase in assuming leadership positions when offered incentives, would be an interesting lens looking more deeply into the specific areas of teacher empowerment.

Implications for Educational Leaders

Educational leaders are overworked and spread thin. In order to alleviate pressures and inability to complete all tasks, these leaders need to rely more heavily on teacher-leaders to take part in the work load. Growth and success are "most likely to occur when employees have autonomy to think, interact, and innovate" (Whitaker & Moses, 1990, p. 128). Teachers

"deserve the chance to seek creative solutions to school problems and find meaning in their work" which can be established through the practice of empowerment (Whitaker & Moses, p. 129).

The results of the current investigation present leaders in the field of education with valuable information on how to strengthen behaviors and practices that can enhance teacher empowerment. Gender of participants was not found to have an impact on level of empowerment felt. Therefore, principals and assistant principals should employ equal practices for empowering both male and female teachers. Gender of the principal and assistant principal, however, have further reaching implications. The gender of the principal is associated with stronger feelings of Status and Impact. Male and female principals, then, will need to be more keenly aware of their ability to affect teachers' perceptions on the impact they have in the school building based on their ability to take part in decision-making and change processes. To enhance levels of felt status, principals and assistant principals will need to take time to make sure that teachers feel valued and respected for the work that they do and for the contributions they make. The gender of the assistant principal was found to be associated with teachers' perceived levels of Self-Efficacy. Assistant principals need to be mindful of the influence they have on teachers in this area of empowerment. Supporting teachers in their decisions and letting them take the lead on solving issues of concern will help increase teachers' perceived levels of competence in the area of self-efficacy. When assistant principals are present, teachers' feelings of decision-making are increased. Delegation can be a critical behavior in the practice of empowering teachers. Principals can charge assistant principals with instructional tasks, who can, then, in turn, elicit teacher-leaders to step up and help tackle such projects. Assistant principals can lead this area of delegation by helping to "develop and support a school

culture that expands the role of teachers beyond classroom teaching […and] nurture the growth of […] teachers and provide opportunities for them to take on leadership roles (Imig, Ndoye, & Parker, n.d., p. 27).

Principals' tenure and teacher perceptions of Professional Growth were associated with one another. This relationship has implications for both experienced and inexperienced principals. Being aware of the professional needs of the building will help new principals take advantage of missing opportunities to support teachers in areas of individualized growth and development. By supporting teachers' interests in attending conferences, workshops, and pursuing graduate degrees, they can enhance empowerment in their buildings. School leaders of any length of tenure can grow levels of empowerment by offering teachers a supportive environment in which they can provide professional development to one another during the school year, and over the summer, by offering incentives such as release time during the day, leaving early, or being compensated an hourly rate for developing curriculum, or other school programming, in collaborative teams, during the summer months.

Current educational leaders need to engage in conversation with teachers on a collaborative level so that they can best gauge the current beliefs and culture of their working environment.   School leaders also need to vocalize to Superintendents the need for additional time and compensation for teachers who embrace additional responsibilities. In addition to time and money, however, building leaders need to make sure that they reinforce teachers' sacrifices by seeking ways to also make them feel valued, appreciated, and respected.

Recommendations for Future Research

The area of teacher empowerment has proven to be a noteworthy, investigative area of study with broad implications for school leaders. However, this study has provided insight into a

very large domain of school leadership. While relevant findings have been discussed, this study uncovers the need for additional research.

Future research in the area of teacher empowerment should investigate, more closely, the relationship between level of teacher empowerment and job satisfaction. If there is a strong correlation between empowerment and job satisfaction, school leaders can use the practice of empowering teacher-leaders to improve the overall working conditions and morale of the organization.

Other variables related to teacher empowerment should be considered. It would be worthwhile to compare levels of perceived empowerment between public school and private school teachers, as well as with online educators. Class size would be another factor to consider when considering perceived level of empowerment. Do teachers who have smaller class sizes tend to take on additional responsibilities?

Now that more universities are offering teacher-leader endorsement and master degree programs, it would be beneficial to research the number of teachers who hold such additional licenses, and whether or not they experience greater levels of empowerment. If the universities are going to be able to sustain these programs, they will need data that show their graduates are successful in the work place with putting into practice the new skills they have acquired. More and more teachers are pursuing teacher-leader endorsement programs as a means to earn additional credits for licensure renewal. However, often times there is little change in their professional responsibilities, or title, after completing the coursework for these programs. Districts could more positively support the work of teachers of these programs by more clearly defining and assigning teacher-leader roles, and providing additional compensation for those teachers who are qualified to fulfill these positions.

In addition to teacher leadership endorsement programs, this investigation proposes a potential need for universities to also reconsider the scope and sequence of teacher-preparation undergraduate programs. If school districts choose to embrace a model of leadership practice in which teachers are empowered to take part in decision-making practices and administrative duties, then it would be imperative for universities to better prepare new teachers to meet the expectations of this philosophy. A potential solution to better prepare teachers for an empowering environment would be to require them to take administrative and school leadership classes as electives.

The final area for recommended future research is reproducing this study in various geographic locations. This study was limited to only teachers and administrators in Lake County, Ohio. This is a very limited and homogenous area. Future studies should be conducted in more urban and rural areas, as well as in various states. Do large, urban school districts experience higher or lower levels of teacher empowerment? Additionally, different states have different teacher evaluation models. Do these models prohibit or enhance the practice of empowering teacher-leaders?

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