A Study of Empowerment: Middle School Principals in Suburban Cook County

Nancy Mary Holman
Loyola University Chicago

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A STUDY OF EMPOWERMENT MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY

VOLUME ONE

by

NANCY MARY HOLMAN

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 1991
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I thank my husband, Bob, and my son, Jason, who provided me the inspiration to keep moving toward this goal and exhibited tremendous patience while it was being accomplished. They were my critics, cheerleaders, editors and chief assistants.

The continued encouragement of my family, colleagues, and friends supported my commitment to completing this dissertation. Special thanks to my parents, Harry and Virginia Skarzynski, who taught and demonstrated to me the true value and meaning of an education.
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CHAPTER I

PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Empowerment is discussed in a variety of recommended programs designed to enhance education as a profession while calling for new structures for school governance. Many of these proposals have come to be associated with the second wave of school reform. Empowerment has been tied to the leadership strategies which support a range of programs including improving the professional culture in schools; restructuring for enhanced decision-making practices; and utilizing professional talent in schools by broadening the base of leadership.¹ ² Principals are in positions that will guide educators


toward these ends. Therefore it seems critical to study their perceptions and attitudes toward empowerment as well as their current experience of empowerment by their superintendents.

Research on the construct of empowerment has gaps. Most of the educational literature defines it in a limited way relating it to decision-making and forms of participative management. It has not been defined for educational organizations as comprehensively as it has for the organizational development or management literature. Furthermore, there is no comprehensive operational definition of empowerment present in the literature. Therefore, the construct of empowerment has not been systematically applied or developed. Studies on empowerment reveal that its results may be worth the effort of learning how to effectively implement it.

I will briefly review some of the studies on empowerment literature relative to organizational development. Studies on leadership and management skills suggest that the practice of empowering subordinates is a principle component of managerial and organizational development.


effectiveness.

Second, the analysis of organizations reveals that power and effectiveness grow when superordinates share power and control with subordinates. Finally, experiences in team building within organizations suggest that empowerment techniques play a crucial role in group development and maintenance.

Focusing on empowerment strictly from the perspective of school organizations directs one to scrutinize several studies and certain political factors which make the study of empowerment in schools extremely important. I will highlight a few of these studies.

Frank Ambrosie in the January, 1988, NASSP Bulletin, describes empowerment as being key to the professionalization of today's educators. He states,

The conditions under which educators work are increasingly intolerable to people who qualify for jobs in the upper echelon of the American workforce, the people who must be attracted to teaching. These people are, and intend to think of themselves, as professionals. Professionals are expected to have

6 Kanter, Rosabeth. 1977, pg. 2.
the expertise to do their work. Organizations who employ professionals are not typically based on the authority of supervisors, but rather on collegial relationships among peers. This does not mean that no one is in charge, but it does mean that people practicing their profession decide what is to be done and how it is to be done within the constraints of the larger goals of the organization.

The Report of the Holmes Group entitled "Tomorrow's Teachers" is similar to the Carnegie Report in terms of a discussion of the importance of empowerment. The Holmes Report reads,

The existing structure of schools, the current working conditions of teachers, and the current division of authority between administrators and teachers are all seriously out of step with the requirements of the new profession.

The Holmes group recommends less bureaucracy in schools, more professional autonomy, more flexibility in establishing leadership roles for a variety of individuals in the organization. The report outlines the need to transform working relationships in education.

Roland Barth, furthers our discussion on the need of empowerment in school organizations by linking it to a process of leadership that increases organizational

effectiveness. He refers to the interaction of all affected parties within the school as the "ethos of the work place." He suggests promising solutions reside within the work place. No individual or specific group can unilaterally run a school, according to Barth. The successful operation of a school is a collective responsibility. Administrators and teachers should contribute to the quality of a school and share in its accomplishments.

The National Education Association and the National Association of Secondary School Principals produced a document called Ventures in Good Schooling in 1986 that describes a model for schools in which the professional autonomy of teachers and the managerial authority of principals are harmonized. They divide the life of the school into six areas and provide key characteristics that appear to generate effective cooperative action within each of those areas.


The studies mentioned so far emphasize empowerment at all levels of the organization. Today's reform efforts speak to the need to empower, but to accomplish this it is critical to first create the conditions administratively to develop empowerment at other levels of the organization. Empowerment will not become pervasive in an organization until leadership at the administrative level recognizes its importance.

The National Governor's Report14, "Time for Results," completed in 1986, recognizes this point in its recommendations. The report calls for empowerment by describing a need for creating new definitions for the role of the principal and superintendent. In this report, principals and superintendents are said to have new and different responsibilities in organizations that serve to empower all educators. Their roles change to one of developing leadership, enhancing professionalism, and encouraging the participation of all members of the organizations.

Goodlad, in his book, *A Place Called School*, agrees that we need to call our attention to the importance of principal empowerment. In his research on the characteristics of "more satisfying" versus "less satisfying" schools he found that empowerment of principals was a characteristic of "more satisfying" schools. Principals, according to Goodlad's research, need to experience empowerment themselves in order to create a sense of professionalism for teachers. He describes his findings as follows;

Principals of schools that teachers found "more satisfying" felt themselves to be significantly more in control of their jobs and use of time and to have more influence over decisions regarding their own schools than did principals of schools perceived by teachers as "less satisfying." Without exception, the principals of the "more satisfying" schools saw the amount of influence they had as congruent with the amount of influence they thought principals should have.

Goodlad emphasizes the need for organizational empowerment. He states that "The guiding principle being put forward here is that the school must become largely self-directing. The people connected with it must develop a capacity for effecting renewal and establish the mechanisms for doing this."  

16 Goodlad, John. pg. 277.
17 Goodlad, John. pg. 278.
Rosenholtz, reminds us that top-down efforts at reform with no sensitivity to empowerment issues do not work. Empowerment, by definition needs to be experienced at the building site, superintendent to principal, principal to teacher. She states,

Many of the recently passed reforms try to regulate both the content and the process of education in the hopes that "fool-proof" instruction will increase the quality of schooling. Legislators and administrators seek to enforce hierarchical control over educators through such routine devices as management by objectives, standardized curriculum packages and minimum competency testing.

Schools given over to production line work implies that teachers are nothing more than semi-skilled workers and principals their operations managers. The two are just waiting to assemble the final package for students.

Principals presently resist the necessity of taking orders from bureaucratic superiors and are not reluctant to test the limits of their professional jurisdiction. They continue to exercise judgment and discretion on a daily basis in the course of performing their work. They discover loopholes, technicalities, and elegant circumventions to approach their work with purposive disregard for reforms that do not advance their educative intention.18

Studies calling for empowerment will not disappear. Both the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers are concerned about empowerment. It is a concern that these organizations have promoted at

national, state, and local levels of government. Along the
same line, the Carnegie Foundation is lobbying vigorously
in order to initiate political pressure and continued
action on its agendas.

So, where do we begin our study of empowerment?

One point of the research is very evident. Empowerment
must begin at the top. If it works there, it can more
easily be embraced at lower levels. Dorothy Wissler makes
this point in her discussion of policy implications of
empowerment.

The issue of school reform through empowerment
is to be lodged upon the office of the
superintendent. Schools are organizations
managed by persons, and as shown in this
research, the superintendent can intend,
that is, make choices as to how the school
district will be managed. Thus if schools
are to improve, executive officers must assume
the responsibility for doing those things
which will bring about improvement. For U.S.
public schools, focusing on this office is more
manageable than focusing on individual school sites.

School reform must encompass the entire
school organization system, which means
making it work in individual school districts.
Even on the district level, empowerment must be
pervasive throughout the system. Targeting
separate schools for reform is not sufficient
to bring about the school reform that is
necessary to have a social impact.

Two aspects are related to this issue. First
principals and teachers at the school site
level are subordinate to the superintendent’s
office. Expecting the lower ranks to perform
independently has shown that successful
schools tend to be rare. Secondly,
equality and excellence in schools will remain
sporadic as long a school sites are focused
upon. Reform and empowerment must begin
at the district level.
We know the importance of strong and visionary leadership at the very top of the organization. Principals are at the top of the schools they lead, but they are not at the top of the school system of which they are a part. Unfortunately, the significance of district-level leadership to the continuing health of the reform movement in education has all but escaped the attention of school reformers.

I would argue, that if the second wave of school is to be successful, we cannot rely on the charismatic leadership of a powerful building principal. It will be necessary for the relationships among boards of education, school superintendents, and other parts of the school system to undergo a fundamental reorientation. This is necessary in order for school reform to be anything more than reports by individual principals and faculties. School superintendents and boards of education must see themselves and be seen by others as the clear leaders in the effort to improve schools.

The message here is that if we are to empower teachers, principals must be empowered by their superintendents and superintendents by their boards. Unfortunately, given the key nature of superintendent/principal interactions, it is disappointing to relate that the current status of these relationships is low level or troublesome.

In Blumberg's study on the effective principal he concluded that, "in most cases the quality of the interactions between these two individuals were reported to be poor or having little interaction. Usually contacts between principals and superintendents were a function of either a specific problem, which the principals felt the superintendent could help solve, or an initiative on the part of the superintendent.\textsuperscript{20}\n
Instead of working to develop empowering relationships between superintendent and principal, in many situations the emphasis in this direction either did not exist or barriers to empowerment were in place. Rosenholtz found that non-empowering leadership, leadership through coercion, to be a barrier in meeting the objectives\textsuperscript{21}\n
\textsuperscript{20}Blumberg, Arthur, \textit{The Effective Principal: Perspectives on School Leadership}. Allyn and Bacon, Newton, Mass.: 1986, pg. 121.

and expectations of school reform. She states,

If our data is any indication, coercive district control is the mark of an unsuccessful superintendent; a powerful school citizenry is the mark of a successful superintendent. The object of this point should be clear enough; to assure that schools will be healthy educative places principals and teachers must share responsibility for their professional destiny by engaging in the decisions through which that destiny is forged. Empowering superintendents tend to model the way principals should treat teachers, and teachers should treat students.

Rosenholtz furthers her conclusions by stating what is likely to occur should superintendents not move toward an empowering style of leadership. Calling these superintendents "stuck" Rosenholtz states,

Stuck superintendents seem to move in the wrong direction faulting principals and teachers for the primacy of their workplace commitment over the shallow finalities of district compliance. They punitively grasp for routine solutions from logjam to logjam, they appear to have forgotten, overlooked, or sorely underestimated the fact that a professional culture does not tend toward bureaucratic compliance; that task decisions are not routine in nature; that the information required for effective decision making cannot be standardized; that principals and teachers feel a strong need for task autonomy.

This discussion leads us to ask questions relative to what components promote, inhibit, or neutralize

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22 Rosenholtz, Susan. pg. 203.

23 Rosenholtz, Susan. pg. 203.
empowering conditions between superintendents and their building principals. Scrutinizing the perceptions of principals relative to the construct of empowerment is key to understanding the current status of empowerment at the administrative level of leadership.

Studying principals' perceptions will provide some insight as to their attitudes toward empowerment, the current status of the empowering process as perceived by principals, and the promoters and barriers to empowerment. If we expect to see a transfer of empowerment to reach teachers, and particularly if we hope that examples of empowerment will be sustained at that level, then we must develop, exhibit and sustain empowering relationships at the top levels of school organizations.

Rosenholtz makes this point by characterizing the leadership necessary to meet school reform agendas today. She emphasizes that old theories of leadership are no longer valid for today's organizational needs and agendas. She states,

The great person theory of leadership requires rethinking. Successful schools weren't led by one person possessing all the wisdom, but by the steady accumulation of common wisdom. Principals must empower teacher leaders in schools superintendents must empower their principals. We must learn to facilitate this process. 24

24 Rosenholtz, Susan. pg. 218.
Though the relationship between superintendents and building principals is key to achieving desired outcomes in schools, it is a relationship that is often ignored or taken for granted. Its potential for promoting sound team leadership and its role in achieving successful outcomes has not been fully explored or developed.

Several research supported conclusions underlining these reform efforts remain consistent. Studies of school improvement programs find that when changes occur, they are the result of district support and site leadership.25 Lieberman talks about change efforts, emphasizing that those who manage change must either occupy the highest authority position in the system affected by the change or they must be in a position to openly use the authority of the person who occupies that top position.26 The critical point she raises is the necessity of the authority of the top office be the visible center of the change activity. Without it, the project is almost certain to be abandoned in the long run.


Cuban concurs with her point stating,

No school board approving policies aimed at system-wide improvement can hope to achieve that condition without a superintendent who sustains a higher than usual involvement in the district’s change efforts. 27

Dorothy Wissler, in one of the very few works of research on the superintendent’s leadership in school reform, speaks to the importance of the superintendent’s role in the empowering process.28 She specifies the changes that occur when central office moves to empower.

Communication patterns inside and outside the central office changed from one of just delivering messages to one of listening; decision-making moved to a consensus model; work style to facilitation; orientation to instruction became a primary focus; an acceptance of the importance of work performance evaluations was fostered; an atmosphere of trust and productivity grew.

Yet, research on the impact of the school superintendency in the last decade is remarkably scant. Almost non-existent is any research on principal empowerment by the superintendent.

A search of the literature on the relationship between superintendents and building principals reveals an

27 Cuban, L. Ibid. pg. 146.
28 Wissler, D. pgs. 74 - 84.
29 Wissler, D. pg. 74.
emphasis on comparison of leadership styles, analysis of decision-making styles, and a look at what makes school administrators effective in their individual roles.

There is very little in educational literature that focuses on the analysis of productive working relationships between superintendents and principals or how leadership of principals might be strengthened by their superintendents. Cuban contends that few studies of either the principal or the superintendent have produced descriptions

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of what they actually do to improve schools. 36

Professionalization of the educational work force emphasizes leadership by and through an empowering process. We need to understand the requirements of this process.

Now, superintendents and building principals are being asked to set the stage and create the conditions necessary to enable the empowering process in their buildings and on a district-wide basis. However, superintendents and principals do not typically come into their positions prepared to model empowerment or teach adults about the process.

The result of little knowledge of how to employ empowering strategies is often a reliance on bureaucratic control. Cuban comments that, "while coercion—DO IT OR ELSE—has been frequently used by principals and superintendents over the last century, it has become increasingly less central to teaching adults in a culture where individual choice is prized among those who work in organizations and call themselves professionals." 37


Marc Tucker’s recommendations based on the work of Peter Drucker, speaks of Drucker’s central challenge - how to manage knowledge or professional workers for maximum productivity. This goal falls to the school superintendent and the building principal. This is where the leadership must come for redesigning systems to move from the management of people who are told what to do to the management of people who think for a living. This is the challenge of school organizations which are faced with the task of achieving the goals and the expectations of the recent reform efforts in an organization made up of professional staff members.

Reform efforts aimed at professionalization and maximizing leadership potential call for empowering staff so that their knowledge base can be broadened to meet the challenges they face, skills can be developed and utilized, decision making can occur at the impact level, and all parties can participate in the development of new ideas and programs. In this process leadership in the organization is "thickened"; competence and productivity are

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strengthened. These are lofty expectations given that empowerment in a school environment is neither easily understood nor achieved.

Hence, as a construct, empowerment has not received the same analytical treatment from management scholars as the construct of power. Despite the recognized role of empowerment, our understanding of the construct is limited and can be confusing.

Conger and Kanungo in their article "The Empowerment Process: Integrating Theory and Practice" state that most management theorists have dealt with empowerment as a set of managerial techniques and have not paid sufficient attention to its nature or the processes underlying the construct. Thus in order for the concept of empowerment to be relevant to schools and educators, it must be defined in terms of the use of power specific to the structure and relationships present in schools.

Statement of the Problem

School reform demands assume a different type of organization which will recognize individuals as professionals and create a culture which empowers and maximizes leadership potential. Unfortunately, all too frequently, school reformers have ignored the enabling conditions necessary to create this. School structures and governance which do not enable and empower, smother, rather than nourish leadership. We must create for principals the enabling conditions to empower.

In turn, it is necessary to analyze the current state of empowerment in order to gain insights into what the construct means, how it is attained and the situations in which it can be successfully employed. Prior to expecting principals to empower others in the system, it is essential for us to learn how they view empowerment and whether they see themselves empowered. It is important to analyze the current status of empowerment in order to more carefully evaluate programs which call for principals to empower others.

This study will be an analysis of empowerment as experienced by middle school principals. It will seek to define the construct, and describe its current status. It will contrast that experience with the state of empowerment principals desire. It will analyze principals' perceptions of the process which supports empowerment by
the superintendent. This study will look beyond a notion of empowerment as the popular topical set of managerial techniques and analyze the contexts most appropriate for empowerment and the actual management practices that foster empowerment.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is an analysis of empowerment as experienced by middle school principals in suburban Cook County. This study is exploratory in nature and will survey the perceptions of middle school principals as to their attitudes and description of their experiences with empowerment. Empowerment of middle school principals by their superintendents will be studied from the perspective of the principal. This study has three main goals.

**Goal One**

- to synthesize the literature on empowerment in order to provide a definition and description of empowerment relative to middle school principals. This preliminary step is necessary so that the construct can be operationalized and studied.

**Goal Two**

- to describe the current status of empowerment of middle school principals by their superintendent as middle school principals perceive and report it in each of the six focus areas of the study. Contrast current status with desired state.
Goal Three

- to describe the conditions which enable principal empowerment from the perspective of middle school principals and those conditions which inhibit the process in each of the six focus areas of the study.

Hypotheses of the Study

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative techniques. It is exploratory in nature with three hypotheses.

1. The requirements of school organizations and the challenges of meeting today’s educational demands require empowering relationships between superintendents and principals.

2. Principals who want to maximize their leadership skills desire empowering interactions/connections with their superintendent.

3. Frustrations reported by the principal in maximizing leadership and accomplishing desired goals correlate positively to a lack of sufficient empowering interactions with the superintendent.

Research Questions

1. How is middle school principal empowerment defined and its process characterized in superintendent/ middle school principal interactions specific to six potential areas of powerlessness, the six focus areas of the study?

The six focus areas are:

a. Belief system/work culture conducive to empowerment

b. Decision-making and problem solving
c. Administrative work group

d. Responsibilities delegated or assigned

e. District mission and building goal-setting

f. Plan for evaluation and professional growth

2. What do middle school principals report to be the current status of empowerment as they experience it in their relationship with the superintendent? (Report on a - f). Contrast the reported status with desired state.

3. What conditions enable and inhibit the empowerment process as experienced by middle school principals in each of the six focus areas?

Definition of Terms

Empowerment

Empowerment is the process of bringing one to the ability or capacity to act by targeting empowering strategies at areas of perceived powerlessness and enhancing one's sense of self-efficacy. It is a process by which power is used, shared or exchanged resulting in the empowered individual or group experiencing a sense of self-efficacy and control over one's environment. This sense of control improves one's persistence to achieve a desired level of performance while enhancing the possibility of achieving desired outcomes. In its absence, one experiences powerlessness (real or imagined); learned helplessness; alienation; loss of sense of self-control.
Empowerment is based on the construct of power. It is based in a motivational definition of power. This perspective of power states that power is derived from a motivational state or expectancy belief internal to the individual. Power needs are met by establishing control over one's environment.

Within organizations, the empowerment process should target areas of potential powerlessness, in order to enhance the targeted person(s) ability to achieve goals. This particular study will focus on six areas of potential powerlessness of middle school principals. The study will define empowerment as it pertains to each area. The current and desired state of empowerment will be identified relative to each area. Factors which enable or inhibit empowerment will be explored. The six focus areas of the study are:

- Belief System/Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment
- Decision-Making and Problem Solving
- Administrative Members’ Working Relationships
- Nature of Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated
- Mission and Goal Setting
- Plan for Principal Evaluation and Professional Growth
powerlessness

Occurs when there is a presence of strategies or conditions which weaken one's need for self-determination or self-efficacy or the absence of strategies and conditions which will strengthen one's sense of self-efficacy and self-determination.

Belief System

The values/philosophy a person or organization holds to, that guide an individual or organization. A person uses his belief system when confronted with a situation in which a choice must be made. The choice involves one's values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) which produce norms (how we should do things.)

Work Culture

The pervasive system of values, beliefs, and norms that exist in any organization. The organizational culture can encourage or discourage effectiveness, depending on the nature of the values, beliefs, and norms.
Decision-Making/Problem Solving

This is the means to achieve some result or to solve a problem. They are the organizational mechanisms, through which an attempt is made to achieve a desired state. The outcome of a process that is influenced by many factors.

Working Relationships

A description of the manner in which members of a work force relate. Relationships can vary depending on the situation or problem. The manner of interaction can be characterized by such terms as team, independent, conflictual, isolated.

Delegation/Assignment of Responsibilities

The process by which authority and responsibility for a task or project is delegated downward.

Mission

The mission is the ultimate, primary purpose, of an organization. An organization’s mission is what society expects from the organization in exchange for its
continuing survival. Missions are criteria for assessing the long-run effectiveness of an organization.

Goals

Goals are future states or conditions that contribute to the fulfillment of the organization's mission. A goal is somewhat more concrete and specific than a mission. A goal is usually a specific target that an individual, group or organization is attempting to achieve.

Evaluation

The process of performance appraisal which includes the clinical supervision process and the summative appraisal of performance.

Professional Growth

The development of an individual which enhances his skills, competence and ability to perform in his work.

Power as a Motivational Construct

This view of power underlies the assumptions that define empowerment for this study. It is based on Lawler's
expectancy theory and Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. Power as a motivational construct is based on a concept of power as an expectancy belief or motivational state which is internal to the individual. Individuals' power needs are met when they perceive that they have power or they believe they can adequately cope with events, situations, and/or people. Power needs are not met when individuals believe they cannot cope. They feel powerless to deal with factors in their environment. This conceptualization of power has at its base an individual's motivational disposition.

Power as a Relational Construct

This definition is included to contrast the definition of power as a motivational construct. THIS STUDY DOES NOT BASE its definition of empowerment on this perspective of power because it is incomplete in explaining empowerment. It is defined here, so as to present a complete picture of power and not simply ignore aspects of the broad definition.

Power as a relational construct is based in management and social science literature. It is used to describe perceived power or control that an individual or organizational subunit has over the other. It is based in social exchange theory and interprets power as a function of the dependence or interdependence of actors. Power
arises according to this theory, when an individual's or a subunit's performance outcomes are contingent not only on their own behavior, but on what others do and or in how others respond.

Expectancy Theory

States an individuals' motivation to increase his efforts on a given task will depend on two types of expectations:

- that his effort will result in a desired level of performance
- that his performance will produce desired outcomes

Perceived Self-Efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as a person's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute performance. It is concerned, not with the skills one has, but, with judgments of what one can do, with whatever skills one possesses. It is a judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance.
Empowerment Process

The process of implementing specific strategies at potential areas of powerlessness in order to strengthen an individual's self-determination or self-efficacy. The goal of empowerment is to enable an individual to reach his goals.

Middle School/Junior High School

Schools with populations consisting of any combination of the following grades, 5th - 9th.

Middle School Principal

The chief administrative officer of an attendance unit within a school district which includes the grade levels listed in the definition of middle school.

Superintendent

The chief administrative officer of a school district. Superintendents are the chief executive officers of the board of education.
Procedures of the Study

This study was an exploratory study which utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Data collection was derived from two primary sources. These sources were:

- A survey mailed to select middle school principals in suburban Cook County, Illinois.
- Individual interviews conducted with fifteen middle school principals from suburban Cook County, Illinois.

The preliminary survey was distributed to middle school principals in suburban Cook County. The 1989-1990 directory of that area indicates there are 110 middle schools which meet the description desired for the focus of this study. (e.g. grade levels and student population.) The survey was composed of a series of questions related to the six focus areas which served to define the construct of empowerment for this study. Using a likert type scale, respondents were asked to respond to each question indicating their current status of empowerment as well as the state they desire.

The second source of data collection was the interview data. Fifteen middle school principals were interviewed. The fifteen were chosen randomly. The purpose of these interviews was to provide further insight to the responses gained in the initial survey and to
explore in more depth various areas of empowerment. Interviews were conducted in individual sessions with principals. Questions followed an outline. The interview questions are in the appendix of this paper.

Limitations of the Study

The major limitations of this study were:

1. The study was conducted in the suburban Cook County area. It may not be able to be generalized to other areas.

2. Public suburban Cook County schools in Illinois consisting of grades 5 - 8, 6 - 8, 7 - 8 or 7 - 9 with a minimum of 250 students were identified for this research. This limitation was set to give homogeneity to the sample.

3. Fifteen middle school principals were selected for individual interviews. This small sample size may lend itself to problems of generalizing of the findings.

4. The qualitative analysis of this study is based on fifteen districts, too small for any multi-variate analysis. This limitation is addressed to some degree by the use of quantitative analysis of the survey data gained from the sample of all suburban Cook County middle schools meeting the criteria of this study.

5. As with any qualitative study, which explores a wide range of areas pertaining to the research questions, there can be problems with causal inference.

6. Interviews rely on memory, or point of view of events, programs, or descriptions of activities, rather than the objective criteria of observation. This limitation is addressed to some degree however by the fact that the purpose of the study is to report perceptions from the perspective of building principals.
Reality exists, therefore, in their perceptions.

7. Since reports are based on memory, one must recognize that memory can become clouded or overcome with a particular event.

8. In emphasizing the relationship between superintendents and principals, activities of significant others can get overlooked. For example, other personnel in district office might play a role in principal empowerment but they are not the focus of this particular study.

9. Interviews, by their nature, lend themselves to be open to interviewer bias, overemphasis of certain responses, neglect of others. Interviews were taped. Taping the interviews assisted in clarifying data and remove bias from the data reduction process.

10. Select subgroups within the pool of survey data respondents were too small to complete a MANOVA analysis based on particular personal characteristics. i.e. years in administration, geographic location of district, etc. A larger sample would correct this limitation.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

A presentation of the construct of empowerment in this chapter follows this progression. The derivation of the word empowerment will be described and its relationship to other constructs in the literature will be presented in the section entitled, "Empowerment and its Derivation". In the next part of the discussion, the section entitled, "The Process of Empowerment: Two Perspectives", two perspectives of the construct of power are presented and contrasted. These perspectives are the motivational and relational perspective. Empowerment is derived from the construct of power and is based on the motivational perspective.

The next section entitled, "Empowerment and its Relation to Powerlessness" covers both the sources of powerlessness and the process of empowering the powerless. This section describes how empowerment enhances one's ability to achieve goals by developing a sense of
self-efficacy, while targeting empowering strategies at the source of powerlessness. Potential sources of powerlessness as well as the process of empowering these areas are identified.

Finally, critical to this study is showing the significance of empowerment in the relationship between the middle school principal and the superintendent. Six area of potential powerlessness between superintendents and middle school principals are identified. These six are the focus areas of the study. The three research questions are applied to each of the six focus areas. The six focus areas are:

- Belief System and Work Culture
- Decision-Making and Problem Solving
- Administrative Work Group
- Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated
- Mission and Goal Setting
- Principal Evaluation and Professional Growth

Empowerment and its Derivation

Leslie Ashcroft, in her essay, "Defusing Empowering: The What and The Why" assists in defining
empowerment. She notes that the root word "power" has origins in both Latin and French, and means "to be able, to have the ability to do or act." Recurring words in various dictionary references are: ability, capability, action. John Dewey also uses power in this basic sense. He speaks to the idea of education being a lifelong process of coordinating the powers that ensure growth. The value of power for Dewey is its forceful impetus to growth and development. He is equally positive about power being present in all human beings.

Using this simple definition of power and adding the prefix "em" means to "bring to a certain condition or state." To empower is to bring to a state of ability or a capacity to act. An empowered person, then, would be someone who believes in his or her ability/capability to act, and this belief would be accompanied by action. Belief and some resulting action are inseparable.

Another word that might be substituted for empowering is "enabling." This word has an extensive list of descriptors in the Oxford dictionary including: to make able, to strengthen and develop competence, to supply


with means or opportunities, to make possible or effective.³

Empowerment has the design of targeting areas of real or potential powerlessness. The process in which power is utilized is key to the success of empowering practices. In reviewing the literature relevant to the process of utilizing power two distinct perspectives are evident.

The first defines the process of using power from a relational perspective. The second holds to a process of using power from a motivational perspective. This study's research base definition for the process of empowerment is based on a motivational perspective.

Though the significance and the place of a relational perspective is recognized, it does not do justice to an understanding of the construct of empowerment. Both perspectives will be presented.

The Process of Empowerment: Two Perspectives

Empowerment as a Relational Construct

Empowerment as a relational construct is based in management and social influence literature. Power as a

relational concept is used to describe the perceived power or control that an individual or organizational subunit has over the other. 4 5 6 7 8

This literature takes its emphasis from social exchange theory 9 10 11 and interprets power as a function of the dependence or interdependence of actors. Power according to this theory arises when an individual’s or a subunit’s performance outcomes are contingent not simply on their own behavior but on what others do and/or in how others respond. Social exchange theory holds that the relative power of one actor over another is a product of the net dependence of the one on the other. Therefore, if actor A depends more on actor B than B depends on A, then B has power over A.


When applying this theory at the organizational level, we see the sources of power lie in the actor's ability to provide a service or resource valued by the organization or in his ability to cope with important organizational problems.

At the interpersonal level, the principal sources of a person's power are considered to be the

- office or position a person holds
- the personal characteristics of the person
- the expertise of the person
- opportunities to access specialized knowledge or information. 13, 14, 15, 16

Depending on what resources actors control, their bases of power have been identified as legal (control by office), coercive (control by punishment), remunerative (control through material rewards), normative (control of symbolic rewards), and knowledge (access to specialized knowledge or information). 17


17 Bacharach, S.B., pg. 39.
Implied in these theories are two assumptions. First that organizational actors who have power are more likely to achieve their desired goals. Second, actors who lack power are more likely to have their goals thwarted or redirected by those with power. It is important to note that it is this type of orientation that led theorists to focus on the source or base of power and on the conditions that promote this type of dependence.\textsuperscript{18} \textsuperscript{19} \textsuperscript{20} These theories led to strategies which focused on resource allocation which served to reduce the power of the more powerful and increase the power of those less powerful.\textsuperscript{21} \textsuperscript{22} \textsuperscript{23}

To continue this line of thought, if power is treated in terms of a relational construct, it becomes a process of sharing power with subordinates. The emphasis

\textsuperscript{18} Nyberg, David. pg. 41.

\textsuperscript{19} Nyberg, David. pg. 52.


\textsuperscript{21} Bucher, R. "Social Process and Power in a Middle School." In M. Zald (Ed.) Power in Organizations (pp.3-4) Nashville, Tn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970.

\textsuperscript{22} Kotter, J.P. 1979. pg. 134.

is on the idea of sharing authority. Delegation and decentralization of decision-making are central to viewing power from a relational perspective. Literature emphasizing this perspective references the sharing of power through quality circles, participative management, and goal setting by subordinates.

This line of thinking does not do justice to the concept of empowerment. There are areas related to power and empowerment that are not addressed in this concept. Conger and Kanungo in their article on "The Empowerment Practice" review some of these limitations.

Empowerment defined and characterized solely as a relational construct is insufficient. This line of reasoning does not adequately address the nature of empowerment as experienced by subordinates. It raises some important questions. For example, does the sharing of authority and resources with subordinates automatically empower them? Through what psychological mechanisms do participative and resource-sharing techniques foster an empowering experience among subordinates? Are participation and the sharing of organizational resources the only techniques for empowerment? Are the effects of an empowering experience the same as the effects of delegation, participation, resource sharing?²⁴

Power as a Motivational Construct

Power as a motivational construct is based on a

concept of power as an expectancy belief or motivational state which is internal to the individual. McClelland discussed a need for this type of power. He correlates it with an internal urge to influence and control other people. A related, but more inclusive disposition to control and a means of coping with life events, has been proposed by several psychologists who have dealt with the issues of primary/secondary control, internal/external locus of control, and learned helplessness.

In these examples, individuals' power needs are met when they perceive that they have power or they believe they can adequately cope with events, situations, and/or people. Power needs are not met when individuals believe they cannot cope. They feel they are powerless to deal with factors in their environment.


Power at this level refers to an intrinsic need for self-determination or a belief in personal self-efficacy. Under this conceptualization, power has its base within an individual's motivational disposition. Strategies directed at the individual which strengthen his self-determination or self-efficacy empower him. Strategies which weaken self-determination or self-efficacy give him a feeling of powerlessness.

Empowerment viewed from a motivational construct implies much more than the delegation of authority described in self-determination, by the competence motive described by White, self-actualization in the work of Maslow, or the need for power theorized by McClelland. These theoretical descriptions for the need for power appear a bit more basic and do not offer as much understanding as the motivational approach to power.


present in the works of Lawler\textsuperscript{34} and Bandura.\textsuperscript{35} Lawler's expectancy theory coupled with Bandura's theory on self-efficacy provide a more complete explanation of the motivational approach to empowerment.

Expectancy theory states that an individual's motivation to increase his efforts on a given task will depend on two types of expectations:

- that his effort will result in a desired level of performance
- that his performance will produce desired outcomes.\textsuperscript{36}

The first expectation is known as the self-efficacy expectation and the second is the outcome expectation. Empowerment increases self-efficacy expectations but does not necessarily guarantee desired outcomes. One can still feel empowered if outcome expectations are not met, provided the subordinate is rewarded and recognized for his attempts at achievement.

Empowerment viewed from this perspective involves an enabling process which affects both initiation and


\textsuperscript{36}Bandura, A. 1986, pg. 46-49.
persistence of subordinates’ task behavior. This is particularly important if we are concerned about the behavioral outcomes which can result from the empowerment process. It is the potential for achieving specific behavioral outcomes that make the study of empowerment particularly critical to the efforts and agenda of school leaders.

The potential of empowerment in terms of its relationship to other outcomes is described by Bandura.

The strength of peoples’ conviction in whether they would even try to cope with activities and behave assuredly when they would otherwise be intimidated, efficacy expectations. These determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences.  

Empowerment and its Relation to Powerlessness

Conger and Kanungo\textsuperscript{38} speak about the need to empower being critical when subordinates feel powerless. In the process of empowering it is important to identify conditions within organizations that foster a sense of powerlessness among subordinates. Once these conditions

\textsuperscript{37} Bandura, A. 1986, pgs. 193-194.

are identified, empowerment strategies and tactics can be used to either remove those conditions or develop a sense on the part of the worker that he can meet his work challenges, thereby retaining a sense of power over them.

Addressing areas of powerlessness is at the core of both the purpose and the strategies of empowerment. In this section, I will describe both the conditions that can lead to a sense of powerlessness on the part of building principals as well as comment the nature of the empowerment process.

Sources of Powerlessness

Rosabeth Kanter in her book, *Life in Organizations: Workplaces as People Experience Them*, discusses why power is not guaranteed for those that hold the top positions in an organization. Her perspective provides insight as to why building principals do not necessarily experience the necessary power and control to accomplish their work. Kanter points to the fact that there is a striking difference between the privileged position in an organization and the ability to make things happen.

She describes people at the top as those who "have

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come the furthest, are the fewest, and get the most." They are seen as the people with power, but Kanter points out that this is not always the case. Kanter clarifies for us the idea that power does not always go automatically with top rank, with elite position, with defined authority to make decisions for the organization. In fact, it often does not. There is a striking difference between privileged position and the ability to make things happen. This is the first and most central paradox of leadership in organizations.

Kanter states, "Despite official control of the largest number of resources, despite official leadership of the largest number of people, the capacity to mobilize those resources and people to get something done may not automatically follow."\(^{40}\) The distinction here is that though responsibility and accountability can be formally defined and assigned, it does not automatically turn into power.

Members of the upper organizational echelon are often aware that power may be elusive. They may also be aware of how hard it is to convince those further down in the organizations that they do not have the sole power to exact the type of change that those lower in the

\(^{40}\) Kanter, Rosabeth. 1977, page 44.
organization may desire. This in itself can be a source of impotence on the part of those high in the organization. That impotence or sense of powerlessness is derived from pressure from below to do something regardless of whether they can.

Warren Bennis\(^\text{41}\) has a similar view to that of Kanter's. Both researchers point out that power in organizations comes from doing the extraordinary, exercising discretion. Power resides in one's ability to create, invent, plan and act in non-routine ways. Warren Bennis points out there is an unconscious conspiracy in organizations to bog down a leader in details. Routine problems are easier, more manageable, require less change and consent on the part of anyone else, and lend themselves to instant solutions that can make a leader look good. Routine work drives out non-routine work.

The cycle continues and becomes more complicated when those in positions of power insulate themselves from the routine operations of the organization in order to develop and exercise power. The irony here is that insulation can lead to another source of powerlessness.

Kanter discussion of middle-level positions in business lends itself to comparisons to the middle position building principals find themselves, when caught between

\(^{41}\)Bennis, Warren. 1984.
the desires of the superintendent and the wants of their staff. "Stuck in the middle" has no easy solutions and can be another source of powerlessness.

Kanter describes powerlessness by characterizing its outcomes. If persons in middle management are powerless to gain the cooperation of those with whom they work, or if they are lacking the authority they need, they often become rule minded or in its worst expression, punitive. She states,

Powerlessness often engenders punitive behavior: the tendency to coerce and punish where moderate persuasion will not work; the tendency to become tight, detail-minded, rule-minded, and inflexible, and the tendency to control even more closely those aspects of the system over which the leader feels he or she does have some power.

Eventually, unempowered supervisors, according to Kanter are provoked by their experiences of powerlessness and frustration of being accountable for results produced by the actions of others into a cautious, low-risk, play it safe attitude. They do not want to lose any "privileges" of their position by rocking the boat. Therefore, getting things right, in a non-threatening, almost ritualistic conformity becomes their method of operation. They feel

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42 Kanter, Rosabeth. 1977, pg. 10.
43 Kanter, Rosabeth. 1977, pg. 92.
44 Kanter, Rosabeth, 1977, pg. 93.
they need this approach to impress those above them.\textsuperscript{45}

Turning our discussion specifically to schools, it is important to note reasons for powerlessness in school organizations and within principals, the focus of this study. Weick offers an insight into the nature of schools and in particular how the characteristics of schools as organizations impact the relationship of superintendents and principals. Weick uses the term "loosely coupled systems" to describe school organizations.

Coupled events are responsive. However, each event is also preserved in its own identity. In the case of educational organizations, it may be the case that the central office is loosely coupled to the principal’s office. The image is that the superintendent and other central office personnel are somehow attached, but that each retains some identity and separateness and that their attachment may be circumscribed, infrequent, weak in its mutual effects, unimportant and or slow to respond... loose coupling also carries connotations of impermanence, dissolvability, and tacitness, all of which are potentially crucial properties of the "glue" that holds organizations together.\textsuperscript{46}

Weick’s image of schools presents each as more or less a self-contained fief, each with its own constituents and its own territory. The relationships among principals are transitory, based mostly on interpersonal liking.

\textsuperscript{45} Kanter, Rosabeth, 1977, pg. 93-94.

\textsuperscript{46} Weick, K. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems." Administrative Science Quarterly, March 21, 1976, pg. 2.
When principals are in contact with each other, issues generally concern interpretation of central office policy. There is rarely a voluntary joining together on problems of mutual program development. This also results in less contact with the superintendent.

If one focuses on Weick's notion of loosely coupled systems, is not the personality of principals but rather the goals, values, and structure of the system which create conditions resulting in powerlessness. Principals as a group are not individuals searching for personal power but rather are searching for the power to accomplish their work. Blumberg provides an interesting description which establishes this premise.

The concern that principals had about power and the lack of it, is very clear. It is not as if they were like "jungle fighters", a type of organizational manager, whose goal is power for the sake of power.

They do not experience life and work as a jungle where it is eat or be eaten, and the winners destroy the losers. To the contrary, none of them seemed concerned at all with self-aggrandizement, or that their organizational life was one big win-lose game, although they certainly won and lost their share of battles.

What really was at the heart of things seemed to be two factors. First they had a

notion of the kind of school they wanted to develop, and second, they needed to have the power to do it, unfettered by external constraints. They are activists and as such quite simply, had to have the freedom to act. Without that kind of freedom it seemed as though they would wilt. Power was indeed an energizer for them, and if they did not have as much of it as they needed they lost part of their sense of being.

Another source of powerlessness in the work life of principals is due to a deepening loss of sense of self-efficacy. As principals see themselves unable to impact the larger system they tend to withdraw and stop trying. Their energy becomes sapped and they insulate themselves. In this process, their morale becomes lower and their sense of self-efficacy is diminished. They "infect" others with their virus. Eventually, it seems as though an entire system has been touched.

McPherson and Crowson in their work on "Discretion in the Principalship" offer further insight as to the source of powerlessness within the principalship. These


49 Blumberg, Arthur. pg. 12.

authors did a study on the constraints related to the role of the principal. They found that these constraints were related to two major preservice sources - experience and training.

In terms of their previous experience, most principals have been teachers. Many have had no other employment in their adult careers other than in a school. Furthermore, there are a number of principals who previously taught in the school or district in which they are now a principal.

There are many reports which support teaching as a foundation for being a strong principal.\textsuperscript{51} Experiences as a teacher are extremely useful. But, Sarason for example, points out that teachers have experience leading groups of children, not groups of adults, and yet this is a critical task for the principal.\textsuperscript{52} Teachers can be loners in their own classroom, their own kingdom, the principal must be effectively interacting with a larger public which


\textsuperscript{52} Sarason, Seymour. The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971.
includes children, adults, and the larger community.  

Perhaps even more important, the average teacher sees only snapshots of the principal at work. He has a set of scattered impressions of what the principal really does. Unless they participate in an intensive internship, teachers really do not have a chance to see and really experience the role of the principal until they are in it. A second area of constraint on the principalship, according to McPherson and Crowson, is their educational preparation. Bridges found that "most studies show no relationship between educational training and subsequent success in the principalship as judged by superiors and subordinates."  

Many universities do not have within their standard certification requirements some exposure to other areas in the life of the principal: problem-solving, and decision-making strategies, analysis of group behavior, community relations, time management, the translation of research findings for use by teachers, program and student evaluation, and group and individual testing.


The constraints of experience and training are further complicated by the constraints of the institution. The principal is suddenly part of management rather than labor. In essence the new principal is placed in an adversarial position with the school and its students.

Further complicating the matter is the sense of powerlessness that can develop between the operative goals of the school and the professed goals. The two combine to form some constraints on the principal.

The professed goals, according to McPherson and Crowson include the supervision of instruction, staff development, and other activities that provide an effective "learning environment" for students. Further down in terms of priorities but also part of the professed goals are expectations that the principal will plan and implement change while effectively managing the daily operation of the school.  

Operative goals as defined by Perrow may be counterpoised against the professed goals which are based on a different set of institutional expectations.

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55 McPherson, Bruce and Crowson, Robert. 1987, pg.

Operative goals may include:

- maintaining employment for the work force
- promoting the overall stability of the organization
- maintaining good relationships with "key" interest groups
- regulating the behavior of potentially "deviant" groups.

Another area of constraint occurs when building principals attempt to avoid "environmental uncertainty." Despite the play in the press, that open, reciprocal exchanges between school, parents, community and staff receive, there still is considerable pressure for what Morris calls "site-level stabilization" coming from hierarchical superiors. Superintendents generally expect the principal to keep his school in order and manage conflict without troubling the central office or board.

This phenomenon has been observed in a number of studies on the principalship and labeled "keeping the lid on," 57 "good and efficient housekeeping," 58 and "keeping things calm." 59

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57 Sarason, Seymour, 1971.
Union contracts can be an additional source of powerlessness, when the hierarchical superiors and the demands of the school also infringe upon the principal in other ways. Kerchner, Mitchell, Pryor, and Erck studied implementation of the union contract by principals and found them caught between a central office demand for uniformity in the application of the contract and a need for flexibility in their own local schools as they dealt with individual situations. As a result, principals engage in an occasional bit of "creative insubordination."\(^6^0\)

A final area of constraint mentioned by McPherson and Crowson is an effort to maintain a prevailing belief system, a set of mystifications or mythologies that help to define the profession. One of these is a "pupil-control ideology" which is significant to school management. Despite a push for innovation, experimentation and change, the building principalship in reality is heavily involved in the maintenance of decorum, disciplinary order and

stability. Time spent being visible during times of heavy student traffic, watching trouble spots, checking groups of the school's most unruly youngsters, hall tours, checks on building maintenance and cleanliness are all sources of constraints of significant magnitude.

Process of Empowering the Powerless

The empowerment process impacts this described sense of powerlessness. It assists in moving individuals from a place where their role is largely functionary to one where they experience mastery. Very little work has been completed which even begins to characterize the empowerment process. Most, of the few studies focus solely on the manner in which individuals are involved in decision-making.

Rosenholtz is one of the few researchers to discuss the process of empowering. In her book entitled, *Schools, Social Organization, and the Building of a Technical Culture* she describes the empowering process as one where principals and superintendents make leadership a

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responsibility for everyone in the organization. Rosenholtz describes it much like "jury duty." The symbolic impact of this action assures the presence of a culture where individuals assume responsibility for the success of their school.

More empowering administrators seem able to galvanize their faculties in specific, goal-directed endeavors, increasing the staff's clarity about what to pursue. The empowerment process improves staff collaboration by creating a shared sense of school purpose, trust, and value accorded them by the administration.

The process is fairly easily identifiable when it is not present. Lack of empowerment results in several discernable behaviors. Rosenholtz highlights a few,

Principals who do not empower demonstrate greater need for control, which prevents the very collaborative activities necessary to bolster their knowledge. They become turf-minded, unable to help teachers solve classroom problems, and unwilling to relinquish control in order that colleagues may render mutual assistance.


Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pg. 64.
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Conger and Kanungo are among the few researchers to conceptualize with any depth the process of empowerment. They describe a five part process of empowerment which targets areas of powerlessness. Their five steps include:

- diagnosing conditions within the organization that are responsible for powerlessness among subordinates.

- using empowerment strategies targeted toward removing or altering these conditions.

- developing strategies to provide self-efficacy information to subordinates, assisting them in dealing with conditions of powerlessness that cannot be removed.

- as a result of the first three parts, participants feel empowered.

- the behavioral effects of empowerment are noticed.  

Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pg. 64.

The authors’ diagram of these stages follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage I</th>
<th>Stage II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditions leading to a psychological state of powerlessness</td>
<td>The use of managerial strategies and techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational factors</td>
<td>Participative management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reward System</td>
<td>Feedback System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature of Job</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence-based reward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job enrichment</td>
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<tr>
<th>Stage III</th>
<th>Stage IV</th>
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<tr>
<td>To provide self-efficacy information to subordinates</td>
<td>Results in empowering experience of subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactive attainment</td>
<td>Strengthening of effort-performance expectancy or belief in personal efficacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vicarious Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal Persuasion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Arousal</td>
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and

Remove the Conditions of Powerlessness

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<th>Stage V</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leading to Behavioral Effects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initiation/Persistence of behavior to accomplish task objectives</td>
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**Belief System and Organizational Culture**

**Conducive to Empowerment**

**Introduction**

Sound empowerment practices are founded in the organization's belief system and work culture. Creating a philosophy and work culture conducive to empowerment is the first step to ensuring that its practices take hold in an organization.

In order for one to be effective in the use of empowerment it is necessary to understand the type of belief system and organizational culture conducive to its development. The importance of this is supported by the adage, "Form follows function", a basic principle of organizations.

Inattentiveness to the belief system of the leadership of the organization and its work culture has implications for achieving desired goals and objectives. Sergiovanni writes, "If form does not follow function, function will be modified and shaped to fit the form." The point of this principle is that schools should be

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deliberately organized and structured with purposes in mind and in ways that facilitate those purposes.\textsuperscript{66}

Such diverse groups as the National Governors’ Association, the Holmes Group, and the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration agree that the current organizational structure of schools and the means available in those structures for professionals to interact does not promote excellence in teaching, learning and school leadership. It does not promote empowerment of the professionals in the system.

In the analysis of the belief system and work culture conducive to empowerment, two different types of organizational structures are analyzed. The two structures which are contrasted are a professional structure, sometimes referred to in the literature as non-rational and a bureaucratic structure, sometimes referred to in the literature as rational. Each structure assumes different mechanisms for leadership.

This discussion does not oversimplify the choice between bureaucracy and professionalization, between a more coercive control and egalitarianism. Such a simplification does not capture the irregularities of schools, the differences in individuals and their needs, and the

\textsuperscript{66}Sergiovanni, T.J. 1987.
variations and possibilities of school governance. Rather, the discussion will focus on general distinctions between a culture which is professional and empowering and one that is bureaucratic, rendering its members powerless. This is not to say that one or the other is all good or all bad or that the leadership practices of school administrators fall all into one structure or the other. Rather, this discussion has the goal of preparing the reader to explore and understand the work environment and practices most conducive to empowerment. The culture of professionalism is that environment.

In reviewing the research relevant to the belief system and work culture conducive to empowerment, four areas important to understanding this area of empowerment are identified.

- A Bureaucratic Model of Organizations
- A Period of Transition
- A Professional Model of Organizations
- Distinctions between the Two Models

A Bureaucratic Model of Organizations

Traditionally, the theory of organizations has been guided by what might be labeled a rational-bureaucratic model and the theory of administration by what might be called a neo-scientific model. Recently, these have come under increased attack.  

A rational model of organizations is almost a mechanistic structure that operates in a bureaucratic fashion. In this view the organization takes on a life of its own, independent of the individuals that comprise it. It is considered a goal-seeking entity attempting to maximize its chances for survival.

The bureaucratic structure has traditionally met the school system's need for a unifying quality. This type of structure has provided the mechanisms by which the system regulates the activities of teachers, principals, and other school professionals and limits and controls the amount of discretion those individuals exercise.

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The bureaucratic model requires clear lines of authority; rules formulated by superiors to govern subordinates; and centralized evaluation, planning and decision making. Most school administrators have been trained to manage such tightly coupled, bureaucratic systems—systems that are characterized by (1) rules, (2) agreement on what those rules are, (3) a system of inspection to see whether compliance occurs, and (4) feedback designed to improve compliance.

Though bureaucratic administrators may solicit subordinate input and delegate important tasks, the underlying assumption is that good administrators are the only ones who are able to see the overall view of what the school should be doing and the only ones who should have the responsibility for seeing that success is obtained.

Schools organized on the bureaucratic model tend to overemphasize specialization of tasks, routine operating rules, and formal procedures in organizing for teaching and learning. They are characterized by a proliferation of


regulations, formal communications, centralized decision making, and sharp distinctions between central office and principals, principals and teachers, teachers and students. Standard operating procedures are emphasized, standard outcomes are established.

This conceptualization of organizations can be extended to administration. Administrators, in this view, are expected to be rational, goal-seeking individuals guided by the scientific method. Taylor's view of scientific management provided the groundwork for this type of thinking. Callahan's classic treatise on the "cult of efficiency" documents how pervasive this concept was in educational administration.

The revolution in organizational and administrative theory has been to expose this type of thinking for the mythology it is. It is not that these views are incorrect; rather, like functionalist approaches generally

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they represent only partial truths disguised as an entire cosmology. Beyond that, changes have taken place in recent years in staff qualifications, task complexity, and in attitudes toward authority that are making the bureaucratic nature of schools untenable. In previous decades, it was possible for leaders to understand, and often to execute, all school tasks better than their subordinates. In many of today's schools those evaluated by their administrator know more about their own work than the evaluatee.

Problems with this approach are based in a new definition of today's worker and what constitutes effective leadership. Duke contends that the behavior of a leader does not constitute leadership until it is perceived as such by an observer. The effectiveness of a leader lies in his or her ability to make activity meaningful for others, to help others understand what they are doing, and to help them communicate to other the meaning of their behavior. The contemporary worker appears to be disillusioned with bureaucratic managers and no longer automatically assigns them power.


Several problems occur when organizations are managed in a bureaucratic style. First, information does not work itself easily up and down the system. It gets distorted and filtered by its transmission through many people, each with a different vested interest in interpreting the situation their way. 80

A second problem is the lowered quality of decisions. The administrator who maintains bureaucratic control tends to restrict the possible solutions and approaches to those he feels competent in using and therefore in controlling. 81

A third problem is that bureaucratic managers decrease the responsibility felt by subordinates for the success or failure of any effort. This results in lower motivation throughout the system. 82

A Period of Transition

Schools are loosely coupled systems which are more elusive, less tangible, and harder to grasp and administer. They require a different set of perceptions and behaviors than does a tightly coupled, bureaucratic system.

80 Weick, K.E. 1982.
The theories of management upon which a bureaucratic structure of schools is based contain core assumptions that do not apply to the loosely coupled nature of school systems. Yet, historically there remains a heavy reliance on bureaucratic structures.

The second wave of school reform relies on an empowering culture of organization, referred to as creating a sense of professionalism. Steps toward professionalism have not been made over night. Rather, changes have occurred in small increments, attempting to apply some attributes of professionalism while retaining many of the components of bureaucratic systems.

These steps of transition have been critical in assisting our understanding of a professional culture and analyzing the role of empowerment in an organization. The transition period can be characterized by its use of research, testing, analysis and experimentation.

During this time researchers have probed the complexities of the process of change, become more aware of the unique nature of complex organizations, and become more innovative in their approaches. 83 84


84 Sergiovanni, Thomas. 1987.
A brief history of the transition period will provide insight as to how professional, empowering organizational arrangements have sprung from these points of dissatisfaction with a bureaucratic structure.

The first alternative perspective to the traditional bureaucratic structure occurred with Weick's view of school organizations as being "loosely coupled". In this typology the school is not seen so much as rational, but rather as a set of loosely coupled units where rationality may be more of a post-hoc explanation of what occurs. March and Olsen's concepts of "organized anarchies" are similar examples.

A second departure from the rational model of organizations is the phenomenological school. Greenfield is a spokesman for this presentation. Organizations, according to this model are not objective, concrete structures; rather, they are consensual realities.


constructed by the members' collective agreements. Organizations in this model are made up of "inside people" who have ideas and act upon them. The organization does not act the people do, their actions then create the organization.

The third challenge to the bureaucratic conception of organizations is being stimulated in the business and public administration field. In Search of Excellence\textsuperscript{88} rejects the traditional business-school model of the rational organization in favor of a more symbolic and cultural approach. Culbert and Mc Donough's\textsuperscript{89} text on radicalized management, calls for the same rethinking of traditional management practices. Frost\textsuperscript{90} has called for a newer and more radical approach.

Thus, there is a shift from the bureaucratic perspective was started. As Clark, puts it,


Slowly, but inexorably, our understanding of organizations and organizing will be illuminated by new perspectives. Cumulatively, these perspectives will define and refine an alternative paradigm that will become the progenitor of numerous competing theories and structures...The traditional paradigm will atrophy along with its derivative schema because it differs too markedly from the logic - in - use in organizations.  

A Professional Model of Organizations

The second wave of school reform relies on an empowering culture of organization, referred to as creating a sense of professionalism. This structure has evolved from the insights and experiences gained during the transition period. The attributes of a professional structure will be essential to solving the problems and achieving the objectives of reform efforts.

In professional cultures, empowering behaviors are made a salient, necessary, and dominant feature of school life. In an empowering environment all members are advanced toward specific goals, each feels that others depend on him or her. The helping behaviors of individuals are furthered strengthened by telling them that their

colleague's chances of attaining a valued goal depends upon their own performance in the situation.

Professionalizing the culture of schools begins with the use of authority and power. Parsons identifies the difference between bureaucratic use of authority/power and professional use of the same.

The source of discipline within a bureaucracy is not the collegial group but the hierarchy of authority. Performance is controlled by directives received from one's superiors rather than by a self-imposed standard and peer group surveillance. This constitutes the basic distinguishing feature between professional and bureaucratic institutions, which otherwise have many similar characteristics.

Benveniste defines professionalization as the substitution of discretionary roles for routinized roles. Professional roles rely on a knowledge base and discretion within the limited domain of that base. Professional roles also provide an ethical stance and assume a calling and a commitment that goes beyond economic incentives.

Other authors have combined efforts to delineate further the difference between bureaucratic and


professional organizations. Donald MacKay's\textsuperscript{94} research was completed by applying the work of Ronald Corwin\textsuperscript{95} on professional organizations to Max Weber's\textsuperscript{96} work on bureaucratic organizations. According to Corwin, a professional person can be characterized by a set of professional attitudes. The extent to which these attitudes are exhibited is regarded as a measure of his professionalism.

MacKay took the work of Corwin a step further and applied it to the bureaucratic model stemming from the writings of Max Weber. Through a contrast of professional and bureaucratic organizations, areas of distinction are more clearly identified. The conditions necessary for professionalism also become clearer. The following chart illustrates this distinction.


**Bureaucratic**

authority of position and competence coincide.

presumes rational distribution; of power based on hierarchy, superordinate over subordinates.

power rests on social control; control over organizational discipline.

assumes differential in technical expertness based on position.

"professional" behaviors exhibited by subordinates are punished.

structural tightness is moving the masses through in same way, same pace; norms dominate.

fixed "power pie."

military type of organization; central office must have power over every decision.

Supt. controls the organization.

training programs "manage" or "limit" conflict. Screen people on basis of background.

**Professional**

as technical expertise increases these two areas do not coincide.

collegial distribution power based on competence, knowledge, expertness.

power rests on social control over expertness.

assumes differential in technical expertness based on competence, knowledge, demonstrated skill.

"professional" behaviors exhibited by subordinates are rewarded.

structural looseness includes unsupervised environment for professionals.

variable "power pie."

decision making done at lowest level possible in the organization.

Supt. facilitates through mediation. Less directing, holds it together by letting others improve their performance.

recognize there are boundaries under which conflict can fruitfully occur.
central office wants loyalty even if it means easy going, passive employees. Important to conserve status quo.

special interest groups may dominate due to key special agendas.

focused solely on outcomes.

authority-position tied.

division of labor.

specified behaviors are delineated.

defined procedures guide decision making.

much impersonality in the organization.

Empowering through a professional work culture and belief system does not require relinquishing all those bureaucratic features of an organization that serve a coordinating function. Rather, the goal is to avoid bureaucratic abuses which create barriers to empowerment.

A reasonable amount of stability must exist in the ways in which schools are organized and operated. To this point, alternative models of schools organizations emphasizing a culture designed to empower its professionals should include certain components. On the one hand, members of the organization should be certain that there are non-negotiable imperatives to which all are expected to adhere. At the same time, workers should be allowed wide discretion as to how they will function day-by-day while those imperatives are pursued. Schools with this design have a strong sense of purpose; professionals have wide discretion but not complete autonomy. 99

Administrators in professional organizations realize that coordination does not require control from the top down. Though principals are characterized as strong leaders, their strength does not stem from their status or from their ability to control the activities of individuals. Conscious efforts are made to minimize differences in status which might limit discretion. Instead, they assume the primary responsibility for certain key processes which enlist the activities of individuals.

conscious efforts are made to minimize differences in status which might limit discretion. Instead, they assume the primary responsibility for certain key processes which enlist others in assisting in those processes.\textsuperscript{100}

If the objective is to empower, then principals, superintendents and teachers work toward agreement on goals and objectives which guide their separate and collective efforts. These provide the basic yardstick for monitoring and evaluating school programs and for determining school needs.

An empowering work culture is based in the belief that the individual school is the fundamental decision-making unit within the educational system. The faculty and principal constitute a natural management team. Central office does not dominate.\textsuperscript{101} Each school is a relatively autonomous unit in which the principal becomes the chief executive officer. The greater responsibility shouldered by the principal is matched by an equivalent measure of authority.

The relationship between the central office and


\textsuperscript{101}Lindelow, 1981.
the school site in a professional structure undergoes a considerable transition from the relationship exhibited in a bureaucratic structure. A professional culture is based in an empowering approach with the principal sharing power and authority with the central office.

The roles of the superintendent and other central office staff change nearly as much as the role of the principal in an empowering work culture. Central office administrators become managers of the school system instead of its bosses; they become support and evaluative staff for the schools. The central office focuses on developing student and staff performance standards, offering technical assistance to schools, determining how much funding each school should get, carrying out system-wide planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

The superintendent continues to be the chief administrator of the district and the person responsible to the board for administrative decisions. Extensive retraining for principals and superintendents is necessary for success and commitment in an empowering work culture.

102 Lindelow, 1981.
103 Lindelow, 1981.
104 Lindelow, 1981.
Sergiovanni provides six organizing principles around which empowering/professional structures should be developed. He states that these principles will contribute to "ownership and increase commitment and motivation to work."105

- The principle of cooperation. Cooperative arrangements facilitate teaching and enhance learning.

- The principle of responsibility. Responsibility upgrades the importance and significance of work and provides a basis for recognition of success.

- The principle of accountability. In successful schools, organizational structures allow staff to be accountable for their decisions and achievements.

- The principle of meaningfulness. When jobs are perceived as meaningful, they not only take on a special significance but also provide feelings of intrinsic satisfaction.

- The principle of ability-authority. In successful schools, organizational structures promote authority based on ability.

As outlined in the introduction, there are not always clear choices between a bureaucratic and professional response to organizational issues. There are situations and contexts in which one can argue the merits of either structure. Empowerment is not always an easy or clear process to accomplish.

Empowerment results in the diffusion of control. Control interacts with other choice options in a synergistic fashion. Should the control be tight or loose in a given situation? What should be the mechanisms for control?

Though necessary control and empowerment appear to be in conflict Kanter proposes a way to understand and appreciate the two. She says,

Does one foster empowerment and tolerate control at a given point, depending on circumstances? I don't think they are resolved by compromise or accommodation. You don't emphasize one and insist on the other to resolve the paradox. This would create an anomaly.

In empowering organizations, one chooses to adopt strategies that result in consistent patterns. It will work because of the routine of polity, infrequency of strategic choice options and the wisdom of people.¹⁰⁶

Summary of Key Points

The Belief System and Organizational Culture Conducive to Empowerment

1. A leader's belief system and a corresponding supportive work culture are critical to the development of an organizational which will serve to empower.

¹⁰⁶Kanter, Rosabeth. 1987, pg. 88.
2. There are several types of organizational structures. Different structures serve different organizational needs. If empowerment of professionals is desired, then the organization must be structured toward the needs of the professionals who work in it.

3. Neither a professional or bureaucratic structure is all good or all bad. Organizations desiring empowerment should emphasize a professional structure while utilizing isolated bureaucratic principles where appropriate.

4. Three schools of thought provided the transition to and the development of professional structures. These included:
   - research on loosely coupled organizations
   - phenomenological school
   - symbolic/cultural approach

5. Areas emphasized in a professional structure include:
   - sharing and distribution of power throughout the hierarchical chart
   - according autonomy and flexibility to those displaying competence and skill
   - superordinates who facilitate or mediate rather than control a process.
   - workers should feel a sense of self-efficacy and ability to achieve their goals.

6. Research on a professional structure indicates that it is most effective if organized around principles of cooperation, responsibility, accountability, meaningfulness, and new lines of ability/authority.
Empowerment in Decision-Making/Problem Solving

Introduction

Empowerment can be directed toward and defined in terms of organizational decision-making and problem solving. Richard Katz provides a helpful background to begin a discussion of empowerment as it relates to empowering through decision-making and problem solving.107

Katz links empowered decision making practices to the attainment of certain goals. These include:

- increased knowledge on the part of those participating in the empowerment process.
- increased knowledge of solutions and alternatives generated by everyone involved.
- increased knowledge of possible consequences of interventions
- development of new behaviors for increasing the effectiveness of organizational leaders.

It is critical for the one doing the empowering to give up some control over choice of specific actions in order to accomplish specific goals. The need to relinquish some control is further emphasized in order for individuals to gain group consensus, group control and assumption of mutual responsibility for goals.

Katz correlates achieving the benefits of empowerment to the sharing of power between multiple individuals or groups. This sharing enhances the capacity of the entire organization to attain organizational goals while increasing responsibility for their attainment. At the same time, he reminds us that the capacity of the organization to take one, single, action may be reduced.\textsuperscript{108}

Rosenholtz reminds us that creating the environment for empowering decision making practices doesn't just happen.\textsuperscript{109} Rather, superintendents, and in turn principals, seem to structure opportunities in the workplace by offering ongoing invitations for substantive decision-making and problem solving interactions. Norms of empowerment do not occur simply by inviting individuals to work together professionally or collaboratively. Rather norms are developed by playing close attention to the process by which resolution occurs.

Certain key elements of creating the right environment for empowerment in this area include:

- frequent, structured, and administratively sanctioned opportunities to problem find and problem solve.

\textsuperscript{109}Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pg. 201.
- every day accessibility of key members of the administrative team in order to promote a sense of mutual cooperation and responsibility for resolving problems.

- opportunities to work on substantive issues of relevance and importance to one's own work and the direction of the district.

- close and visible follow-up to decision making discussions so that those involved in the process feel their work means something.

- self-confidence and a sense of efficacy are built by creating a non-threatening environment to identify needs and find solutions. Skills are strengthened the process is constructive and productive.  

Moving from this introduction, four areas of the research relevant to empowered decision making are important to cover. These areas are:

- reasons systems fail to empower

- components and philosophy of an empowering decision-making problem solving process.

- the change process necessary to achieving empowered decision-making.

Reasons Systems Fail to Empower

There are significant barriers that can impede empowered decision making and problem solving. One of the most basic is that the existing flow, the status quo of an organization can work against empowerment. It takes

Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pgs. 201-205.
rethinking, new learning and organizational changes to create the philosophy, strategies and mechanisms which empower. Studying impediments to the process can help in an understanding of the significance of empowerment.

Rosenholtz, identified several other characteristics of principals and schools which serve as impediments to the process of empowered decision making. The first of these is the compulsion to conceal problems. In non-empowering environments, principals desiring consultation with their superintendent meet with one of two reactions. They either threaten their superintendents, or principals themselves experience a sense of loss of self-esteem and self-control. There is too little tolerance for the ambiguity that comes with innovation and change.

Rosenholtz sums up a non-empowering decision-making environment with the following description:

Non-empowering superintendents seem to move in the wrong direction - faulting principals and teachers for the primacy of their workplace commitment over the shallow frivolities of district compliance.

They punitively grasp for routine solutions from logjam to logjam. They appear to have forgotten, overlooked, or sorely underestimated the fact that a professional

Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pg. 203.
culture does not tend toward bureaucratic compliance; that task decisions are not routine in nature; that the information required for effective decision making cannot be standardized; that principals and teachers feel a strong need for task autonomy. \(^{112}\)

Another barrier to empowered decision making lies in a reliance on a bureaucratic structure. \(^{113}\) Excessive bureaucratization creates conditions emphasizing routinization where discretion is needed. In this process effective decision-making is inhibited. Bureaucratization can be emphasized at times of organizational stress.

Organizational stress can occur with several situations. There might be difficulty identifying the problem issue, the real problem may be unknown or unclear. Another barrier is where we know what is to be achieved, but we are not sure how to proceed - that is, the technology is unclear. Or we know what our goals are, we know much about the ways to achieve desirable outcomes, but the tasks are so varied and changing that constant adaptation is needed.

In an empowering environment these situations are dealt with by putting an emphasis on a significant diagnostic effort, where professionals and other informed

\(^{112}\) Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pg. 203.
people can identify factors related to the problem and how it might be remedied.

This requires empowering people throughout an organization. This level of empowerment takes time. In order to permit empowerment to occur, trust levels must be high. But it takes time to develop trust. Due to perceived time constraints, lack of skills or the appropriate climate, bureaucracy often takes the place of more empowering practices. 114

Process of Empowered Decision Making/Problem Solving

Purkey, Patterson and Parker, 115 offer some insight into empowerment and decision-making process by identifying how empowerment strategies should be directed. They recommend placing empowering strategies in input controls. In this process school leaders define the task, give the resources and allow the freedom to get the task done. 116

Professionals come to work with some expertise and knowledge. A leadership strategy that emphasizes input controls relies less on routines and evaluation and far more on the spirit, attitude, socialization, technical knowledge and responsibility of staff.

Warren Bennis\(^{117}\) outlines this same process and calls it leading with direction or a common purpose. This does not imply relinquishing power but rather providing autonomy to make decisions with an understanding of where an organization is headed.

Garfield\(^{118}\) furthers our understanding of the empowerment process with two analogies: "decision-making as educated risk-taking" and a "we rather than I philosophy." Decision making, as educated risk-taking, is not seeking risk as a thrill, but rather "seeing a situation from an entirely different angle from someone else", identifying every obstacle that could prevent success, and eliminating as many of those as possible. Confidence is built in the employee by encouraging such risk-taking and then providing a chance for successful self-correction in the event of a setback.


Sergiovanni's\textsuperscript{119} idea of empowerment through "purposing" supports Garfield's notion of educated risk taking and Bennis's notion of leading with direction. Purposing is defined as power with direction. Purposing bridges the gap between ability and authority.

Garfield's\textsuperscript{120} "we rather than I" philosophy is evidenced in situations where there is a concentration on solving problems not placing blame. Garfield's empowered worker, a peak performer, has an expanded view of who is on his team. Team members can be anywhere. They are anyone to whom you provide a service. A leader is not an administrator who loves to control others but rather someone who provides the resources necessary to assist others in accomplishing their goals.

Attention to the process of change underlies a successful decision-making/problem solving empowerment process. This change process involves a widespread understanding of problems, new roles, top level support, and a well thought out strategy.


\textsuperscript{120} Garfield, Charles. 1986. pg. 68.
Phillip Schlechty gives a comprehensive summary of the components necessary to the change process in empowered decision making. These include

1. A proper formulation, widespread understanding and sharing of the problem to be addressed.

2. Roles must be developed within the system to assure that certain tasks are covered. These include the ability to conceptualize, make the public aware and provide continuous feedback.

3. A plan for the institutionalization of change efforts must be present from the start, not as an afterthought.

4. Those who manage change efforts must either occupy the highest authority position in the system affected by the change, or they must be in a position to openly use the authority of the person who occupies that top position. The authority of the top office is the visible center of the change activity.

5. Those most directly affected by the change, must be involved in both defining the problem and in identifying the solution; even more important, they must perceive themselves as being involved.

8. Action often precedes understanding, and change requires action. Those who manage change must be prepared to act on limited data, and they must understand that in acting they will generate new data.

Reported Experiences of Empowerment in Decision-Making

This section will close the discussion on empowerment relative to this area. The purpose of this section is to provide some descriptors which might further clarify an understanding of the process of empowerment. Very little research has yet been completed regarding school organizations' experiences with empowering in the decision making process.

The best of the few available was completed by Dorothy Wissler.¹²¹ This study looked at the impact of empowerment across a number of different areas. Dorothy Wissler summarizes her findings regarding principals' experiences with empowered decision making.

For "retired-on-the-job" types and even for some excellent principals it was a time of terror. They were faced with a set of demands which were 180 degrees different from those to which they had been socialized both in school and on the job. Some had been principals for 15 years and now they were faced with decisions such as: Will I be able to work this way? Shall I stay? Will I risk losing control of the people under me? What if I stay and fail?¹²¹

Wissler talks about the empowerment process requiring a balance between power and responsibility. The

role of the central office, for example, is not entirely advisory. There are limits. Some administrators recognize the limits and the new balance and others do not. Wissler found that empowerment in the area of decision making had two significant effects on principals.

First, and foremost, they were responsible for their own schools. The buck stops with them. They were to make decisions effecting their buildings and could not pass the decisions to the central office. Schools in an empowered district no longer had to be alike and neither did their programs. Principals were no longer looking to central office and the board to define needs but rather turned toward the staff, children, and parents to serve a unique set of needs.

Second, principal leadership and autonomy in the area of decision making resulted in a tremendous boost in morale. A loyalty to the district developed.

Summary of Key Points

Empowerment and Decision Making/Problem Solving

1. To empower relative to this area requires that one have a perspective of leadership which is not to control but rather has the aim of gaining group consensus and assumption of mutual responsibility. This is characterized by a "we rather than I" philosophy. The power of the group is more powerful than any one individual.

2. In empowering decision making practices, the process of decision making is the key to effective decisions. The process is
characterized by accessibility, visibility, and frequent interactions with one's superordinate.

3. Leaders who empower should focus their empowering strategies on input not output controls. This means that they should define the task and then provide autonomy, with direction.

4. Discussion and work must focus on substantive issues which are resolved by strengthening group members' skills, building self-efficacy and creating a climate which encourages educated risk-taking and innovation.

5. Attention to the process of change underlies a successful decision-making/problem solving empowerment process. This change process involves a widespread understanding of problems, the development of new roles, top level support, and a well-thought out strategy.

7. The results of empowered decision-making and problem solving are the creation of options, choice, more distributed authority with corresponding responsibility.

Empowerment and the Administrative Work Group

Introduction

Empowerment is also defined in terms of how members of a working group relate. Several researchers have recently indicated that certain management styles are no longer as effective as they once were. For example, Lawler and O'Toole\textsuperscript{123} found position power no longer to be as effective an influence between subordinates and their supervisors. Doug Briez found that effective leaders
longer had as much need to dominate their subordinates. 124 Lawler, Renwick, and Bullock 125 found workers want some form of participative management.

O'Toole's research complemented the findings of Lawler, Renwick, and Bullock in finding that today's workforce wishes to be more entitlement oriented or wishes to have more direct control over key decisions. Researchers such as these make the case for an empowering process between subordinates and their superiors that assumes a team approach.

In research conducted within the corporate sector, peer acceptance as a team member was identified as a prerequisite to building a power base. As individuals move through the ranks, they find that their track record for working with peers becomes critical in future situations where power tools are needed.


The research on empowering the work administrative work group reveals two areas that are important. These are:

- defining work group empowerment
- process of empowering the work group

Defining Work Group Empowerment

There are three key descriptors which create a definition of empowering the work group.

- activating power in others
- leadership designed to achieve results
- maintaining collaboration by balancing encouragement and responsibility

Garfield\(^{126}\) provides us with an understanding of the philosophy upon which empowering the work group is based. That philosophy calls for activating or releasing power in others. Garfield states that this benefits all team members in the long run. In developing, rewarding, and recognizing those around us, team members are allowing the human assets with which they work to appreciate, in return the whole enterprise becomes more successful.

Empowering team builders emphasize a drive for achievement as opposed to a drive for dominance. Leading by dominating is distinguished from empowerment in that it results in people retreating into comfort zones where they take as few risks as possible and ultimately where they reduce their contribution to the team or leave the team altogether. Empowerment stimulates growth for achievement. Results are important, growth for growth sake is not enough. Skills are valued but technical skills, no matter how useful, are not sufficient in themselves.

Sergiovanni describes this same pattern as power investment or using power to empower others. It is not power over people and events that counts but rather power over accomplishments and over organizational purposes. Empowerment is necessary to establishing organizational control and effectiveness. To improve these areas it is necessary to delegate or surrender some control and allow for the power to act.

Garfield assists with a description of this concept. He makes reference to the idea that individuals


129 Garfield, Charles. pg. 65.
who lead by empowering don’t just direct teams they join them. They know how to participate and when and how to lead. These individuals don’t subscribe to a sense of power as dominance over people but rather dominance over results. Peer pressure is an important component of this philosophy. It supports the adage, "if my end of the boat sinks so does yours." Teamwork in this sense implies a sense of support not intimidation.

Garfield\textsuperscript{130} furthers this description by defining the empowerment process as a collective act. Individuals studied, who exhibit characteristics of empowerment manage collaborations with other people to leverage their results. Finally, the team empowerment process calls for collaboration with a careful balance of encouragement and responsibility.\textsuperscript{131}

Empowerment through the team is a process of activating capacities to achieve. Stretching the ability of others is not shirking responsibility or a refusal to take control. Rather, it is keeping a balance, holding co-workers to commitments and at the same time encouraging

\textsuperscript{130}Garfield, Charles. 1986, pg. 67.

\textsuperscript{131}Garfield, Charles. 1986, pg. 69.
people to learn to take initiative, to trust their own ways of getting the job done better than before.

Process of Empowering the Work Group

The discussion in this section is focused around two characteristics of the process of empowering the work group: delegating and forming alliances.

Astuto and Clark\textsuperscript{132} explain that effective school leaders concentrate on establishing direction through enactment processes rather than projecting or defining intent in task. They foster a sense of individual efficacy and "esprit de corps" placing the participants in responsible positions, and set the "stage for them to invest their energies and skills in the organization." This view accentuates the value of lower participants and establishes the leader's responsibilities in relation to them.

This type of philosophy sets the stage for effective delegation. It characterizes the delegation process as one where the supervisor has already established the direction or vision for the organization. Therefore,

\textsuperscript{132}Astuto, B. and Clark, M., School Organizational Change and Development. Santa Monica, California: Goodyear, 1987.
he does not need to control individual tasks. Those tasks can be delegated by providing a more generally stated direction.

The philosophy of the organization, the vision set by the leader, establishes the process by which the task will be accomplished. In this way, persons in the organization can be successfully empowered through delegation. Tight control on individuals undertaking delegated tasks is not necessary.

Garfield\textsuperscript{133} proposes that all empowering team builders possess the skill of delegating. This implies delegating in order to multiply one's strengths. That means refraining from making decisions others might better make themselves.

Controlling all the work will only distract the peak performer from higher priority activities. Delegating is a way to stretch other people, build their confidence, and encourage them to take risks. Sergiovanni\textsuperscript{134} agrees with Garfield, stating that in order to empower it is necessary to delegate or surrender control over accomplishments and allow for the power to act.

\textsuperscript{133}Garfield, C. 1986, pg. 82.

\textsuperscript{134}Sergiovanni, Thomas. 1987, pg. 134.
The second characteristic of empowering the team is through the formation of alliances. Empowerment doesn’t always flow from the top down. Senior administrators can enhance their own power by building alliances with subordinates. Senior administrators must count on those lower on the organizational chart to implement policies and programs that the board of education and top administration develop. In addition, high level administrators acquire credibility when their work is supported by their subordinates. 135

Cohen 136 noted that empowerment through teaming occurs through alliances formed at various levels in the hierarchy of an organization. Alliances can be formed through sponsors, peers, and subordinates. I will outline the research regarding empowerment through sponsors since that most closely parallels the relationship between the superintendent and principal.


Empowerment through sponsors occurs when leaders of an organization have the clout to empower those at lower rungs on the organizational ladder. Senior level administrators, such as principals or superintendents, acting as sponsors, play five important functions in the empowerment process.

First, they assume the responsibility for ensuring that appropriate introductions are made to key administrators in the organizational hierarchy. Second, sponsors can defend an individual when he or she is the center of controversy. Third, sponsors can recommend an individual for promising assignments, which will further empower the employee. Fourth, sponsors can cut red tape, bypassing the usual chain of command. By giving a "drop by anytime" invitation to selected individuals, sponsors can dispense information and short-cut the formal communication structure via these informal relationships.

A fifth function of sponsors is to provide powerful backing at strategic times. For employees located in middle and lower slots on the organizational chart, a big chunk of empowerment comes from the credits they've earned through access to resources in the form of backing by influential administrators.
Summary of Key Points

Empowerment and the Administrative Working Group

1. Research indicates that bureaucratic management styles are no longer as effective as they once were. The professional workforce of today desires empowerment.

2. The emphasis of working relationships in an empowered team is on achievement not dominance.

3. These working relationships are developed by balancing encouragement and responsibility.

4. Empowerment occurs by actively releasing the power in others. This is accomplished through "effective delegation," a process which of establishing direction, while allowing for autonomy in task accomplishment.

5. In highly empowered administrative groups, individuals and working teams create alliances throughout the organization, establishing an "esprit de corps."
Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated

Introduction

Empowerment implies the sharing of leadership and power. Authority is necessary to taking on a more proactive leadership role within the system. Sharing of authority means the sharing of responsibility. It also means redefining roles in the system. In the process of redefining roles to achieve empowerment it is critical to look at the specific nature of responsibilities assigned or delegated.

Responsibilities assigned to the middle school principal by the superintendent do not vary much from district to district, at least in comparisons of principal position descriptions. Middle school principals' areas of responsibility usually include such areas as; instructional leadership, evaluation of personnel, building management, community relations, student concerns.

In looking at what characterizes empowerment it is necessary to look beyond the positional description of what middle principals do, to analyze the manner in which responsibilities are delegated and how they are handled once delegated. This is particularly key to matters within the building where principals do not differ that much on their positional descriptions. The survey and interview questions also ask principals whether they are involved in
any areas outside the immediate sphere of their building. This is another way empowerment can be measured.

A review of the research relevant to the area of responsibilities assigned or delegated identified two areas that are important to cover.

- outcomes of perpetuating powerlessness
- guidelines to empowering: responsibilities assigned or delegated

Outcomes of Perpetuating Powerlessness

There are times when it is easier to recognize how something works by pointing out what occurs when you are not doing things correctly. Empowering in the area of responsibilities delegated or assigned is a good example of this. The introduction to this section stressed the idea that middle school principal position descriptions do not differ that much across districts. So, research, data and analysis contrasting what responsibilities principals are delegated is not going to provide insight into this area of empowerment.

Instead, this discussion will begin from a different angle. Research that describes the outcomes of not empowering or perpetuating powerlessness in the area of responsibilities delegated will be presented. In approaching the discussion this way the importance of empowering in this area will be evident. In identifying
the ramifications of non-empowering leadership, one becomes more knowledgeable and sensitive to what does work.

Responsibilities assigned or delegated to the principal is an area that is often taken for granted in the relationship between the principal and superintendent. Not enough thought is put into what responsibilities should be assigned to the principal or how to make the process of delegation one that is empowering. This results in a failure in assuming that with delegation one has the necessary power to accomplish the job and will be supported and enabled to do so. This assumption is incorrect. It is one that frequently is applied with fault to principals.

Empowerment does not always come with the position one holds. Principals may be officially vested in a position which connotes power in the district, but they may actually be powerless. This results if they hold a position without the enabling conditions of empowerment; skills and resources. These include the granting of autonomy and responsibility, providing needed direction, and support. When the enabling conditions for empowerment are not created, certain behavior patterns can be anticipated.

These patterns may include any of the following:

- responding to the situation by setting tight controls
- resorting to the levers of reward and punishment (Rewards might include bending the rules; punishment occurs through creating a lot of rules and
bureaucratically enforcing them.)

- playing it safe; in a low or no risk stance
- guarding one's turf; protecting one's self from perceived intrusions

These patterns may result in:

- loss of control
- resistance and anger from one's subordinates
- demands of ritualistic conformity
- no innovation, no opportunities for subordinates to go beyond one's immediate boundaries, for resources or ideas to get a job done.  

The above discussion illustrates the importance of empowerment in order to make things happen within a school district. It also highlights the idea that empowerment is not simply increased power, or delegation of new responsibilities, but also requires that the required skills, resources and support are provided.

As Kanter describes it,

The empowered powerful are not only given material and symbolic advantages but they are also provided with circumstances that can make them more effective mobilizers of other people. Thus they can accomplish and, through their accomplishments, generate more power. As this builds, they can build alliances, with other people as colleagues rather than threats, and through their alliances, generate more power.  


\[138\] Kanter, Rosabeth, 1977, pg. 119.
In contrast, the powerless are caught in a downward spiral. The controlling behavior of powerless leaders elicits further resistance to power, provoking more rule-minded attempts at power, leading to a segmental orientation with no rewards for risk taking, change, and ultimately growth.

In today’s changing environment, school districts can’t afford a segmental orientation. They need leadership with a vision of how to integrate a new sense of organizational structure with flexible strategies.

Guidelines to Empowering:

Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated

Purkey and Smith present the construct of power as an expanding entity within the school district. They also make the assumption that the acquisition of responsibilities and tasks is the basis by which people and organizational units become empowered.\(^{139}\)

These researchers outline several guidelines which allow for an empowered system. These include:

- assignment of meaningful, manageable tasks with clear boundaries.

- carefully delineated time frame and set reporting relationships.

- inclusion of all parties with a stake in the issue.

- a mechanism for providing visibility, reward, and recognition for team efforts.

- clearly understood processes for the formation and dissolving of groups, along with an understanding of how the work will be used after the life of the project. ¹⁴⁰

Other researchers have offered perspectives as to what type of activities and responsibilities will effectively build empowerment. According to Kanter, only selected types of job activities increase the power of persons within the organization.¹⁴¹ Specifically, activities contributing to empowerment meet three criteria: (1) they are extraordinary, (2) they are visible, (3) they are relevant to pressing organizational problems. Each of these will be described in some length.

Extraordinary activities are particularly important in preventing too much routinization and increased

¹⁴⁰ Purkey, C., and M.S. Smith. 1983, pg. 432.

bureaucratic controls. If the school district routinizes all assignments by reducing opportunities for creativity, risk taking, and experimentation, the district diminishes any hopes for people to perform in an extraordinary fashion.

In contrast, enterprising school districts can actually create opportunities for empowerment by creating new positions, providing alternatives to work in new programs, teaming and collaborating in different fashions, or flexibility in job placement.

Visibility is the result of allowing the flexibility for innovation. Employees who are willing to take risks by staking claim to innovative projects can accumulate resources, information, and support for subsequent activities. If successful in their venture, employees can count on empowerment growing within the organization.

In contrast, invisible assignments are those which are part of the standard operating procedures of the district. Just being a principal doesn’t automatically create visibility. For activities to enhance power, they have to attract the attention of others in the school district.

Even extraordinary and visible activities won’t necessarily lead to individual empowerment without the third ingredient, relevance.\textsuperscript{143} To be considered relevant, activities must be associated with pressing school district issues.\textsuperscript{144} Warren Bennis describes relevance as being particularly important to the role of the leader, calling for leading by empowering others through work experiences that have meaning and significance, work which will make a significant difference in the organization.\textsuperscript{145}

Summary of Key Points

Empowerment and Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated

1. Empowerment in this area is based on a definition of power as an expanding not finite entity. The acquisition of responsibilities and tasks is the basis by which people become empowered.

2. Responsibilities assigned must include a clear, general, direction but allow for autonomy in the manner in which they are completed.

3. In order to be empowering, responsibilities assigned must be extraordinary, visible, and relevant to the concerns of the organization.


\textsuperscript{144} Cohen, Michael D. 1974. pg. 56.

4. Tasks should be meaningful and manageable with clear boundaries. They should include specific time-frames. All parties with a stake in the matter should be included. There should be mechanisms for providing reward and stability. Finally, there should be processes for the forming and dissolving of groups.

5. Evidence of empowerment relative to this area is sometimes more obvious in the problems that occur in the absence of empowering strategies. When held powerless, individuals will set tight controls, play it safe, with little risk, and guard one’s turf.

Empowerment and the Planning Process
Specific to Mission and Goal Setting

Introduction

Empowered, but for what? What is our direction? The National Governor’s Council 1991 Report on Education, "Time for Results" summarized task force testimony from school principals that indicated principals felt confusion about their role and direction in schools. The report summarized testimony this way:

Many principals feel that a lack of agreement about the primary role of the school results in confusion about the principal’s role. They agreed that districts often fail to set priorities for principals.

They said a principal’s most important responsibilities are rarely made clear. Should the goals of a school be to manage the school’s business affairs, serve as instructional leader, attend meetings with other administrators, communicate with parents, deal with discipline
problems, or all of the above?\textsuperscript{146}

The testimony brings out the importance of empowering in the area of district mission and building goal setting as a way of addressing the potential powerlessness associated with those areas. As evidenced in the testimony before the Governor's Council, powerlessness lies within the lack of clear expectations for principals.

Principals are looking for direction from superintendents in regard to district mission and goals so that individual building goals can be consistent with those of the district. Second, principals need and desire latitude in the process of accomplishing their goals.

The task of articulating the mission and defining and shaping the organization's goals, is according to Andrews,\textsuperscript{147} perhaps the most important leadership function of the board and superintendent. If the leadership of a school system can excite its constituents and obtain their commitment to the purposes of the system, the job of implementing the strategy.

Superintendents must lead the pack in terms of facilitating a process whereby district mission and goals are determined. They are not only in the position to provide direction in terms of desired outcomes but are really the model for how the process of mission and goal determination should take place.

Empowerment can be defined in terms of addressing powerlessness in the planning of the organization’s mission and building goals. In reviewing the research relevant to this area there are three sub-areas that are important to cover. These are:

- guidelines to empowered mission and goal setting
- process of mission setting
- process of goal setting

Guidelines to Empowered Mission and Goal Setting

Rosenholtz, in her research conclusions, puts heavy emphasis on the role of the superintendent in empowering principals in the area of mission and goal setting. In more empowering districts, superintendents did several things to enhance empowerment relative to this area.

Empowering superintendents

- involved principals in district mission setting.
- supported principals with their work on building goals
- symbolically, verbally and in written form conveyed a sense of direction and purpose to all those involved in goal and mission setting efforts.
- clarified the locus of improvement, that is, they identified what they wanted to see in the building goals in each school.
- developed a method of communication around goals, which involved a shared reality about district and school level practices.
- permitted principals to determine their building's technical needs.
- focused on follow-up after goals were set, demanding accountability for outcomes, process and policies.
- when recognizing that progress was not forthcoming relative to a particular goal, they directed other district support to the situation and did not abandon or ignore the problem.
- allowed task autonomy after goals were set. Controls, when utilized, were contextually embedded within a larger sphere of district-level practice.
- requested that principals afford their teachers the same opportunities they were receiving for defining a collective reality in their schools.

These areas are accomplished in an atmosphere of cooperation. Rosenholtz noted that empowering districts indicated a strong mutual influence between schools, and between district office and individual schools.

Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pgs. 172-175.
Interactions were typically task focused, while engaged in the continual process of renewing, revising, and reconstituting goals over time. 149

Norms of continuous improvement were evident throughout the district. Non-empowering superintendents, according to Rosenholtz, seem to understand that "improvements" were necessary but cosmetic changes were favored to more significant change efforts.

These cosmetic changes were necessary to counter unfavorable political trends that might threaten their survival in the district. Empowering superintendents tend to direct their districts toward student learning, whereas the direction for those who tend not to empower emerges as random and disorderly, the product of political interests. Non-empowering superintendents harbor low regard for principals' and teachers' capabilities.

Process of Mission Setting

"The mission is the source of peak performance." Charles Garfield opens his chapter on mission setting with that quote. He defines a mission statement as the process "whereby a vision is translated into language which

148 Rosenholtz, Susan, 1988, pgs. 172-175.
Developing a mission, therefore, means seeing a pattern in the things and thoughts that get you moving; assessing your resources; then formulating your feelings into words. It means bringing together two major components: visual and verbal. The mission statement provides the why that inspires every how.

Kelly, like Garfield, sees the mission of an organization as the path to the future. It should capture the attention and concentration of everyone in the organization. The mission represents the most desirable state possible, a glimpse of what can be. Missions are anchored in values and are at times difficult to articulate. They are always in the process of becoming akin to Maslow’s actualizing stage. Prior to working with the organization, leaders should articulate their own visions.

There are several ways of forming a mission statement according to Kelly. There is the intuitive approach which begins by asking workers to make a list of what they want to create, prioritizing the list, and

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then focuses on where the organization is with respect to the list. Leaders work with the rest of the organization to help structure an action plan.

The analytic approach pieces together input from organizational workers by asking the five w's. Whom do we serve? What do we do? Where do we want to go with our efforts? Why are we focusing on this work and these goals? Where do we put our ideas into operation?

The benchmarking approach combines the intuitive and analytical. It seeks both quantitative and qualitative standards. A determination of whom is to be served is determined by identifying the best in a variety of other settings. Standards are described in both qualitative and quantitative measures. Descriptions are presented in terms of "having arrived" or "reaching a standard." Critical steps to achieve the end result are outlined.

Commitment to the vision is demonstrated by first building alignment with everyone in the organization. The next step is to announce the mission and spotlight successes. Rewarding excellence is key to celebrating and showing how people display competence.


153 Kelly, Michael, 1988, pgs. 50-52.
One must be open to change by altering the mission if necessary or changing course. On the other hand, if one is sure about the approach, it is important to hold ground, letting people know why a particular direction is being maintained despite criticism. In order to accomplish this you must know your bottom line. Finally, feedback on performance is crucial to ongoing progress.

Garfield tells us that missions are developed by a process which emphasizes the discovery of one's preferences, drawing on one's past, having no preconceived limitations, and being pulled values.154

The National Association of Secondary School Principals' Council on Middle Level Education developed a work entitled, "Developing a Mission Statement for the Middle Level School."155 In this work, clear objectives and a process for developing a mission statement which will serve to empower members in the school are outlined.

The document mentions the importance of including the organization's stakeholders in defining the mission statement for the school. The process utilized should

154 Garfield, Charles, pgs. 84-86.

focus on agreements, not disagreements. The statement should be direct, short, and easy to remember.

Once the mission statement is drafted, it should be referred to frequently and acknowledged in decision making. The statement should be discussed from time to time, and reviewed on a regular basis to be sure it is still appropriate in view of the population served by the school, changes in curriculum mandates, new community or social expectations, and emerging knowledge about academic subjects and the nature of adolescent learners. Finally, the mission statement should be disseminated widely in the school, the school system, and the community.

Process of Goal Setting

Dean Bowles, in his discussion on strategic leadership for schools states that the issue of power must be resolved if the goal setting process is one which empowers. According to Bowles, people can be empowered in the goal setting and planning process by using power in different ways. These include:

1. Reframing the issues to look at ownership and responsibility issues as well as issues relevant to who ultimately benefits if the problem is addressed.

2. Changing the system through which decisions are made to include a process whereby all key stakeholders are invited to participate, given access to appropriate information and trained to work in a process which supports empowerment.

3. Augmenting the base of power through expanded control of information and expertise.

Empowering in the area of goal setting is impacted by issues related to anxiety and control. Anxiety occurs when ambiguity is present. Ambiguity can create political uncertainty in transition periods. The anxiety, released by change can be contagious. Rumors flourish and reach out to include everything and everyone. Information is imperative and should be repeated frequently. When people are experiencing anxiety, they do not hear well.

If people are to respond constructively to a plan and are to experience empowerment, then there must be a clear vision or goal that sets the direction. Second, there must be dissatisfaction with the present situation so that motivation for change is present. Finally, action steps in the direction of the goal must be clear and available.

The issue of control also relates to the process of empowering in goal setting. Helping people manage their anxiety productively assists in reducing their resistance to change, but one must also tap their positive energy, which provides the motivation to move the process forward. They must feel they have some control over the process and can influence the process. They need to experience ownership. Fear of loss of control on the leader’s part or consulting with and involving others too little and too late are the primary reasons why people do not experience empowerment in this area.

Participation in the goal setting process is tricky. It is not always possible, nor do principals and superintendents want to always throw open the door and invite all kinds of groups to participate.

The literature on participation in the goal setting and planning process covers a broad spectrum of information, broader than what is necessary for this discussion. It is important to note however, that one does not empower in this area just to make people feel better about themselves or their school. Participation under these circumstances may backfire. Roles should be outlined, goals clearly formulated, manner of using input outlined. Different types of problems require different approaches.
Summary of Key Points

Empowerment in the Setting of
District Mission and Building Goals

1. The task of articulating the mission and setting the goals for an organization may be the most important component of the empowering relationship between superintendent and principal.

2. The organizational mission is the state the organization desires to achieve. Goals are the specifics of getting there.

3. Several key components related to district mission setting are necessary if the process is to result in empowerment. These include specifics about what one should see, what should occur in the organization, key individuals should have opportunities to participate, focused follow-up to mission and goal setting should occur, and district support and assistance should be included.

4. The process should include both intuitive and analytic components and should be based on both quantitative and qualitative data.

5. The committee that works on the mission statement should build alliances with the rest of the organization so the impact of the mission spreads.

6. The mission should be based on knowing one's priorities, drawing on the past, one's intuitive sense about what to do, not have preconceived limitations, and be based on values which represent a contribution not just a profit.

7. In order to create an empowering goal setting process several areas are important to remember. First, issues should be reframed to look at ownership and responsibility issues. Key stakeholders should be included. The information network in the organization needs to be strengthened.
8. An empowered goal setting plan should include a data collection period, a new organizational structure to optimize success, clear communication of plans, and continued building of alliances to make it work.

Empowerment and Plan for Evaluation and Professional Growth

Introduction

There are three points that need to be clarified as an introduction to this section. First, the word evaluation is used in this discussion to imply the entire clinical supervision process between superintendent and principal, including both the formative and summative components.

Second, professional growth, in districts which empower, involves the comprehensive plan for learning and professional development which is not the same as the district staff development plan. The differences between the two will be cited later in this discussion.

Finally, the plan for evaluation is tied to the plan for professional growth in districts which are building an empowering culture. They are not separate processes, with completely distinct goals, but rather they elements of a common aspect of empowerment. The aspect of empowerment they address together is ensuring competent leadership through the identification and strengthening of
skills which create empowerment.

John John Smyth's article entitled, "An Educative and Empowering Notion of Leadership" clearly establishes the tie between the evaluation process and professional growth plan in districts desiring empowerment. Smyth defines the evaluation/professional growth process as one, whereby through feedback and discussion, one comes to an understanding of where they have come from, what they are doing, and where they are heading.

He defines the empowering aspects of the process as the process of enabling individuals to develop ways of framing their own problems, working individually and collectively on defining and uncovering other possibilities, while working towards obtaining the resources necessary to effect changes.

The evaluation and professional growth cycle is not meant to be a patronizing approach, showing experienced personnel how to be a principal or how to teach. Rather, it involves working collaboratively on issues that belong people you are evaluating and with whom you are designing


161 Smyth, John., W., 1988, pg. 179

162 Smyth, John., W., 1988, pg. 182.
professional growth plans.

Smyth contrasts this view with past efforts which left educators with less than satisfactory results. Previous efforts tend to portray educators as having deficiencies and in need of monitoring and skill development. The evaluation and professional growth plan, in this sense, revolved around the "experts" providing "how to do it" prescriptions for the presumed defects of others. The problem with this approach is that it entrenches existing feelings of powerlessness, docility and subservience.

In defining empowerment in the area of principal's plan for evaluation and professional growth, four key areas of research will be presented.

Principal Evaluation

- characteristics of non-empowering evaluation systems
- the components of an empowering principal evaluation

Principal professional growth

- sources of powerlessness impacting professional growth
- the components of an empowering plan for principal professional growth
Characteristics of Non-Empowering Evaluation Systems

As discussed earlier in this paper, non-empowering interactions assist us in learning about the advantages of empowerment and the contexts in which empowering interactions can make the most impact. With that in mind, this section will serve to identify some of the factors which result in barriers to an empowering evaluation system.

Blumberg found that non-empowering superintendents lacked any consensus with principals about what should occur in their schools. Therefore they found nothing to observe. Rosenholtz identified a positive correlation between the lack of empowerment and situations where school goals were in short supply.

In Rosenholtz's research school goals were missing from the district's evaluation procedures. An empowering plan for evaluation calls for school goals to be embedded in the plan for principal evaluation. Another problem noted by Rosenholtz was that the evaluation of the principal in non-empowerig districts was not tied to specific improvement criteria. This created a situation, which at best, symbolically sanctioned divergent school goals, and at worst, did not show evidence for any

164 Blumberg, Arthur. pg. 180.
meaningful goals.\textsuperscript{165}

In non-empowering districts, Blumberg found that few goals in the principal's evaluation were tied to student learning outcomes. There was a lack of appreciation for the direct link between principals' activities, teachers' instruction and student learning outcomes.\textsuperscript{166}

Components of an Empowering Principal Evaluation

If principals are to feel empowered through the evaluation process, then certain goals for the process should be established. In an extensive study on principal evaluation, the Northwest Educational Cooperative developed a philosophy statement for principal evaluation.

An effective principal evaluation should increase principal motivation and job related communication between principals and central office. The evaluation process should be the vehicle for discussing current performance, determining a principal's development and training needs and for talking about advancement, desires and opportunities.\textsuperscript{167}

An empowering principal evaluation contains a

\textsuperscript{165} Rosenholtz, Susan. pg. 127.

\textsuperscript{166} Blumberg, Arthur. pg. 180.

number of fundamental statements of philosophy about how, why and with what effect, principals learn. These are the essence of empowerment targeted toward the plan for principal evaluation. 168

1. Improvement in educational leadership occurs not as a consequence of superintendent intervention, but because principals can see that systematically examining what they do enables them to uncover alternative possibilities.

2. Principals, rather than researchers or central office staff, generate theory about the principalship. Through an inquiring approach to their own theories, and by using their work as the focus for inquiries, principals are capable of continually challenging and changing those theories.

3. Assisting principals to adopt an inquiring approach to their work involves a deliberate process which includes:
   a. articulating plans
   b. implementing those plans
   c. observing and collecting evidence
   d. analyzing the evidence for inferences
   e. reformulating further plans for action

4. The persons principals see as credible and who they would like to collaborate with in analyzing their work depend on more than organizational factors and position.

5. Commitment to a decision about what aspects of the principalship will be the focus of change requires direct involvement by the principal.

6. In order for superintendents to be prepared to assist principals in developing new directions one must have the means of analyzing one's own practices first. An active central office commitment to allow risk-free self-evaluation to occur is therefore necessary.

7. Change needs to occur in manageable proportions. It must begin with issues of immediacy, relevance and practicality for principals.

A survey of elected officers of AASA, NASSP, NAESP, and NEA showed over 90% agreement regarding the inclusion of the principal in the design of the evaluation process. Besides receiving the views of the evaluator, the principal should have the opportunity to set goals for himself and to personally evaluate progress made toward goals. Criteria for evaluation should be predetermined, clear and mutually accepted.

James Herman in his article entitled "Evaluating Administrators - Assessing the Competencies", identifies five requirements of a well functioning administrative evaluation system. These include,

1. A clear statement of competency areas.
2. A list of sample indicators.
3. A requirement that evidence be provided.
4. A weighting of the competency areas.
5. A differentiated weighting for the various administrators to be evaluated.


170 Buser, Robert and Bonds, Fred. 1984.

Competency areas should be left to the discretion of the school district, but several areas were suggested in the article. These included leadership, school climate, planning, instructional management. These areas should be defined for the evaluatee. Indicators are specific descriptions which make it clear to the evaluator and evaluatee what is expected. Evidence would be specific citations of when, where and in what manner the competency is indicated. Points are given based on a weighting scale, typically 1 - 5, to each competency area. Points for an area are then totaled.

Such a model allows for objectivity, it is definitive in terms of what is expected, it results in weighing or evaluating individual competencies, and it results in a discussion and outline of specific competencies which signal productive performance relative to each area. Evidence must be provided to support all statements. The model permits easy conversion to a merit pay system or performance pay and/or to a follow-up professional plan.

Principal Professional Growth

Empowering professional development is more often advocated than achieved. Professional development does not mean the simple acquisition of new factual knowledge.
Rather, it is a dynamic process of learning that leads to a new level of understanding or mastery. It occurs when there is a heightened awareness of the context in which educators work, compelling them to examine accepted policies and routines.\textsuperscript{172}

Professional development is distinguished from staff development in several ways. First, professional development is designed for individuals as opposed to groups. Second, it fosters the cultivation of uniqueness and virtuosity. Staff development encourages collective growth in a common direction. Third, professional development focuses on differences, while staff development is guided by school and district goals. Finally, professional development leads to increased personal understanding and awareness while staff development leads to enhanced repertoire of skills/concepts.\textsuperscript{173}

Goodlad and others have written that superintendents are not prepared to meet the professional needs of their principals. Goodlad speaks to this lack of preparation.

\begin{quote}
Each superintendent should take as his first order of business responsibility for selecting promising prospective principals and developing in them the
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{173}Duke, Daniel. pg. 71.
ability to lead. In fulfilling this role, it may be necessary for the superintendent to draw upon expert assistance to provide the necessary training.\textsuperscript{174}

The guiding principle being put forward here is that the school must become largely self-directing. The people connected with it must develop a capacity for effecting renewal and establish the mechanisms for doing this.\textsuperscript{175}

Superintendents are in roles where they can provide key mentoring relationships to principals. Kieffer\textsuperscript{176} completed research on the role of mentoring in empowerment. He describes this as the empowering evolution. The mentoring relationship, according to Kieffer, centers around the sharing of power to attain mutual goals. In this process both the mentor and the protege directly benefit. This relationship, combined with the enabling impact of supportive peer relationships create a collective organization structure which empowers.

Kieffer offers accounts from those experiencing empowerment in this personal development sense. In these personal accounts the mentor is described as someone


\textsuperscript{175}Goodlad, J.L. pg. 277

"who saw beyond me, pushed me, no matter what the fear."\textsuperscript{177}

In an empowering, mentoring, relationship, solutions are different from the traditional self-help groups. Individual conflicts are more explicitly put into an organizational frame of reference.

With an empowering professional development program the individual as well as the organization benefits. There is increased engagement in the organization. This results in change and growth in one's capacities to effect the organization.

Once empowered, one experiences more interconnections, more individual and organizational critical analysis, and importantly, more action toward goals. Empowerment results in extended involvement, more time to understand, more motivation, more action, more proactive movement, and professional growth.

Looking at the empowerment capabilities of mentoring relationships, it is particularly unfortunate that more emphasis on the role of the superintendent as a mentor is not stressed and developed. He could assist in identifying and building the skills of principals.

It seems ironic that more emphasis is being placed on developing the leadership role of teachers, while

\textsuperscript{177}Keiffer, C.H. 1984, pg. 59.
little is being done to develop the skills of principals and superintendents as leaders who can empower. Behaviors resulting in professional development and empowerment must be modeled. Principals are more likely to empower if they both experience empowerment and see that it is supported in their district.

Sources of Powerlessness Impacting Professional Growth

According to Goodlad, the skills principals lack in positively effecting educational improvement efforts are many. He states,

They do not know how to select problems likely to provide leverage for schoolwide improvement, how to build a long-term agenda, how to assure some continuity of business from faculty meeting to faculty meeting, how to secure and recognize a working consensus, and on and on. Most are insecure in their relations with faculty members and rarely or never visited classrooms. They are somewhere hopelessly mired in paper work, exaggerating the magnitude of the tasks involved, in part, to avoid areas of work where they felt less secure. Remedying these deficiencies becomes the major agenda item at monthly meetings of the entire group.\(^{178}\)

The 1991 National Governor’s Council Report on Education reaffirms Goodlad’s concerns. In addition, it concludes that there are significant problems related to the manner in which the concerns are being addressed. The

\(^{178}\)Goodlad, J.L. pg. 280.
report states that there is much concern about the preparation and professional development of school administrators. Research indicates that the problem begins at the university level where "most university departments of educational administration use a training structure that is largely irrelevant to the work structure a principal will face on the job."\(^{179}\)

This sets the stage for a cycle of problems underlying a considerable gap between current knowledge relevant to effective principles and the practices for training, selecting, managing and supporting principals. Professional development opportunities for practicing school administrators often are not much better than preservice training. Cornett's research showed that school districts historically have not focused on developing the human resources in their district. Schools typically spend about one-tenth what private industry devotes to development of personnel.

Professional development sessions often consist of infrequent, one-shot, meetings on a variety of topics. Principals seldom have an opportunity to help design the training experience or learn from each other.

Principals need to be empowered with the knowledge and skills to make their schools effective. Yet, the results of a National Education Association survey which compared the practices of effective school leadership with existing practices in schools, found that principals consistently did not exhibit the leadership necessary for effective schools.  

The Components of an Empowering Plan for Principal Professional Growth

Smyth and Little have completed research on the empowerment process relative to professional development. The following is a combination of the principles they cite as indicative of a process which empowers. The process of professional development should be:

1. field-based, focusing on crucial problems of leadership, and not, therefore, divorced from the realities of classrooms and schools.


181 Smyth, John. pg. 183.

182 Little, Judith, Warren, "Seductive Images and Organizational Realities of Staff Development," Teachers College Board, Volume 86, Number 1, Fall, 1984.
2. controlled by the educator who is participating in the process and, therefore, the educator should have collective input into training and implementation.

3. congruent with and contributes to professional habits and norms of collegiality and experimentation.

4. focus on issues of immediacy and practicality.

5. be a way of making informed decisions about change based on collected evidence and dialogue about its meaning. Therefore, it should be conducted often enough and long enough to ensure progressive gains in knowledge, skill and confidence.

Rosenholtz adds to our understanding of the culture which promotes empowerment in professional development through the identification of three conditions which are necessary for professional growth.183

The first of these is task autonomy and discretion, the sense that achieving work goals results directly from purposive actions. Individuals must feel that their own intentional efforts cause positive changes to occur.

The second condition deals with psychic rewards. Rewards must be built into the professional development plan. They must outweigh frustrations, otherwise work tends to lose its meaning and alienation increases dramatically.

The third condition relates to learning opportunities, opportunities to increase one’s talents and

183 Rosenholtz, Susan. pg. 164.
instructional strategies, to better master one's environment, to repel professional stagnation and to experience a sense of continuous progress and growth.

James Conway in his article, "Normative Roles and Administrator Preparation: Examining Sports Metaphors of Organizations" applies a sport metaphor to school leadership. In his article, the process skills and knowledge base that the administrators of the 1990's will find necessary to become empowering leaders are identified. 184

Basketball, according to Conway, is the sport most similar to the process of empowering organizational leaders. It relies on team relations for success. Cooperation is more important here than in other sports, "players continually face situations in which they can either go it alone or work cooperatively with other players." 202 The game requires particular skills from the coach. The coach is as involved as a leader, as each player is in his position.

Like the basketball coach, the role of the principal in an empowered school, or the role of the superintendent in an empowered district, is one that requires:

- high interaction with organizational members
- skill in managing across teams to assure coordination while at the same time encouraging autonomy for innovation.
- skills in working with people to create the relationships necessary to working as a team.  

Conway believes a "multi-model" structure for organizations is necessary in order to empower professionals in the organizations. His "multi-model" for empowered organizations, is based on the basketball team metaphor. The model places the coach in the center of a dozen or so overlapping and concurrent basketball games. The role of this multi-game coach is to maneuver the players into well-suited teams encouraging them to manage themselves as they manufacture their plays. Thus the skills of this leader are twofold: (1) having knowledge about structuring multi-teams and staffing them with the best combination of players, and (2) teaching, developing, and encouraging player leadership.

The first set of skills requires a knowledge of the intricacies of matrix organizations; how to form them and how to operate within them. Matrix is a combination of product and function structures, a dual-focused design or school within a school. Principals will have to know what the strengths are of each structure, how to move from one

to the other, and how to operate within them. Matrix is a combination of product and function structures, a dual-focused design or school within a school.

A second set of skills required for leaders to be empowered is knowledge of how to motivate and develop intra-team leadership. Manz and Sims shed light on this type of skill. They examined leader behaviors that facilitated worker self-management. Their conclusions identify what is necessary to motivate and develop intra-team leadership.186

Manz and Sims looked at semi-autonomous work teams in manufacturing plants. Within each team there was an elected team leader. A head administrator, like the school principal was responsible for the team leaders. The central questions of the researchers were: What were the behaviors of the head administrators responsible for teams coordinators? What behaviors were the most facilitative for self-management of group members? The conclusions were that the two most important skills were (1) to encourage self-reinforcement and (2) to encourage self-observation/evaluation.

Though as Manz and Sims are an example of the research on the nature of empowered leadership and

empowerment, there remains uncertain successes in terms of the practices of empowerment. Conway asked the question of why the processes for an empowering model of leadership are so difficult to implement? He looked at Howard Gardner's 1983 book, *Frames of Mind*, for some answers.

Gardner's book sheds light on the type of intelligence which may be necessary for executing successful empowering leadership. It leads us to some conclusions for the direction of professional development for principals and superintendents.

Gardner's description of the six intelligences that human beings possess, include five basic intelligences and a sixth that is derived or of a higher nature. The six intelligences include linguistic which is the ability to understand and apply the rhetorical aspect of language. This includes the ability to use language to convince other individuals of a course of action, the capacity to use this tool to help one remember information, and the ability to use language in explanation and teaching.

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189 Gardner, J. 30 - 57.

190 Gardner, John. pg. 78
Musical intelligence is made up of pattern recognition and composition, using the cores of pitch, rhythm, and timbre with a totality not unlike linguistic intelligence.¹⁹¹ There are two contrasting ways of processing music; knowing that and knowing how. Know - that is essentially propositional knowledge or theory of the subject; know - how is the intuitive knowledge derived from experience.

Logical - Mathematical intelligence is not contained in the auditory/oral sphere. This can be traced to confrontation with world objects. This is akin to the intelligence of the scientist who uses supportive statements, models, and theories which are logically consistent and susceptible to mathematical treatment, and which bear a justifiable relationship to the facts which have been discovered.¹⁹²

Spatial intelligence is the world of visual - spatial thinking. It is one’s capacity to perceive the visual world accurately, to perform transformation and modifications based on one’s initial perceptions.¹⁹³

Bodily - Kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to use one’s body in highly differentiated and skilled ways,

¹⁹¹Gardner, John. pg. 85.
¹⁹²Gardner, John. pg. 95.
¹⁹³Gardner, John. pg. 98
for expressive as well as goal-directed purposes. This implies both fine and gross movements of the body.\textsuperscript{194}

Personal Intelligences include both the internal and outward aspects of a person. The former is the ability to access one's own feelings of life and the latter is the capacity to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular, among their moods, and outward aspects of a person.

Conway reflecting on Gardner's work concludes that there is not enough emphasis on the development of all six intelligences in the professional development of school leaders. He feels a combination of the six intelligences, with critical emphasis on the interpersonal and kinesthetic intelligences are necessary for successful administrator performance in an empowering model of leadership.

He also calls special attention to the distinction between "know - that" and "know - how" knowledge acquisition. "Know - that" knowledge is used in self-reinforcement and self-observation and evaluation. It is not useful in knowing how to implement such behaviors. Gardner suggests that the acquisition of expertise associated with the bodily - kinesthetic and "know how"

\textsuperscript{194}Gardner, John. pg. 101.
knowledge flourished in preliterate societies. This occurred through initiation rites, bush schools, and apprenticeship systems. Becoming empowered and learning to empower are based in knowledge and behaviors contained in a balance between academic preparation and experiential learning. The implication for school principals and their superintendents is that we need to uncover ways to distinguish all six intelligences and the other capacities identified and learn to continue to develop them.

Summary of Key Points

An Empowering Principal Evaluation and Professional Growth Plan

1. In an empowering work culture the plan for evaluation is tied to the professional growth plan.

2. An empowering evaluation and professional growth plan is supported by the following components; it defines clearly strengths and areas of needed change, there is both collective and individual work toward goals, and finally, an emphasis is placed on obtaining the necessary skills and resources to effect changes.

3. Principals need an environment which is risk free and permits the direct involvement necessary for commitment. Change must be manageable.

4. The thrust of principal evaluation should

   - be placed on the principal's systematic analysis of his work.

195 Conway, John, pg. 107.
- emphasize principal input and previous experience.

- involve principals in the articulation and implementation of plans.

- include a data collection process which guides the formulation of future plans.

5. Components of the principal evaluation should include a clear statement of competency areas, sample indicators, evidence of behaviors, and a weighting of competencies.

6. The thrust of principal professional development should be on the uniqueness of the individual, focus on differences, create personal understanding and awareness, involve principal interaction as well as a mentoring relationship with the superintendent or other supportive individual.

7. Professional development should be field based. A collective influence should impact both training and implementation. It should be conducted in a collegial and experiential atmosphere. It should be influenced by needs which are practical and immediate.

8. Professional development should build skills of knowing how to manage with high interaction with the entire organization. There needs to be an emphasis on strengthening skills in managing across teams, skills of creating coordination, autonomy and empowering relationships.

9. Knowledge gained should be relevant to how matrix organizations operate, how intra-team leadership is developed. Personal as well as team self-reinforcement skills and self-observation skills should be encouraged.

10. A person's intellectual skills need to be developed with particular emphasis on the interpersonal and kinesthetic intelligence.

11. "Knowing that" and "knowing how" are both necessary to successful professional development.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Restatement of the Problem

School reform measures call for a different style of administrative governance. They call for a process and corresponding behaviors and actions which treat individuals as professionals by creating a culture which empowers. Though there has recently been much discussion about empowerment, little research has been conducted which analyzes its processes and impact. In addition, the term is used in a variety of ways, its definition has not yet been operationalized in terms of school administration.

Prior to looking at empowerment of teachers, a popular topic of school reform, it is necessary to understand it from the perspective of school administrators. In order for empowering relationships to be created within the teaching ranks it must be first understood and modeled at the administrative level.

The major problems of this study were to develop a definition of empowerment as it exists between middle
school principals and their superintendents, describe the state of its current existence and compare that state to the state principals desire. In researching this problem, an exploration into the requirements of empowering relationships as well as the processes which underlie it were conducted.

The specific goals of this study were:

Goal One

- to synthesize the literature on empowerment in order to provide a definition and description of empowerment relative to middle school principals. This preliminary step is necessary so that the construct can be operationalized and studied.

Goal Two

- to describe the current status of empowerment of middle school principals by their superintendent as middle school principals perceive and report it in each of the six focus areas of the study. Contrast current status with desired state.

Goal Three

- to describe the conditions which enable principal empowerment from the perspective of middle school principals and those conditions which inhibit the process in each of the six focus areas of the study.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was limited to suburban Cook County middle school principals. Schools eligible for inclusion in the study were middle level schools, with any combination of grades in the range of
grades 4 – 8. It was stipulated that schools were to have a population of at least 250 students to be included in this study.

Two types of data collection were used in this study: interviews and written surveys. A sample was selected for each data collection situation. The first sample was comprised of principals responding to a survey mailed to each of the 110 middle school principals listed in the 1990 suburban Cook County school directory. This sample consisted of sixty respondents who returned usable surveys.

The second sample was a group of fifteen principals randomly identified to provide a geographic and school size cross representation of suburban Cook County. They were the source for data collected in individual interviews.

Description of the Data Sources

The first source of data was from the survey mailed to each of the middle school principals in suburban Cook County, Illinois. The first part of the survey consisted of questions relative to personal data of the respondents. The second part of the mailed survey consisted of thirty-nine questions. The first thirty-eight questions required two responses. Each response utilized the same likert scale asking participants to note their responses on a scale of 1, "always" to 5, "never". The first response
was in reference to the respondent's "current experience" relative to the question. The second response was in reference to the "state the principal desired."

The first thirty-eight questions of the survey related to the six areas of empowerment explored in this study. Questions were randomly ordered on the survey so as not to place questions related to one area, (e.g. decision making and problem solving) consecutively on the survey. Questions were posed both positively as well as negatively. The thirty-ninth question was open-ended asking whether the principal experienced powerlessness in his position. This question was included to determine if other areas of empowerment should be explored further.

The second data source was the fifteen principals involved in individual structured interviews. Interviews were conducted following a particular outline of interview questions. The interview questions are in the Appendix of this study. The first part of the interview requested responses to a series of questions pertaining to the personal data of the respondents. The next six sections pertained to the current and desired status of the six areas of empowerment explored in this study. The last question on the survey asked principals if they were experiencing powerlessness in any other area of their work.
Procedures for Collecting the Data

This was an exploratory study which utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Procedures supporting each method of research were utilized. A separate procedure was used to collect data from each data source. As already discussed, data collection was derived from two sources:

- A survey mailed to select middle school principals in suburban Cook County, Illinois.
- Individual interviews conducted with fifteen middle school principals.

The survey was distributed to middle school principals in suburban Cook County. The 1989-1990 directory of that area indicates there were 110 middle schools which met the description desired for the focus of this study. (e.g. grade levels and student population.) The middle school population was the focus of this study for two reasons. First, there is more congruity in the grade level make-up of middle schools. They tend to be 6th - 8th grade and in some cases 5th - 8th, 7th - 8th or 7th - 9th. There is not as much fluctuation as with elementary schools where there is much more variance. i.e. k-2, k-3, 2-4, 2-5, etc.

Second, a study of the empowerment process at the administrative level in middle schools tends to be clearer
than a similar study at the secondary level. At the secondary level, there is an increased likelihood of a variety of other central office personnel who might also be involved in the principal empowerment process.

The study focused only on suburban Cook County because the area will provide a large enough sample to obtain the necessary data. By focusing on one county there was more control over the population and less likelihood of variance in results due to factors not relevant to the focus of this study.

The survey was mailed with a cover letter to each of these principals. A brief introduction and background of the study was provided. Instructions for completion of the form were also included. Principals were assured of complete confidentiality. Opportunities for receiving the results of the survey were provided.

Respondents were given two weeks to return the survey. Follow-up phone calls were made to principals one week after receiving the survey, thanking them for their cooperation and encouraging them to return the survey if they had not done so already.

In addition to collecting data through the survey, fifteen middle school principals were interviewed. The principals were randomly selected by assigning random numbers to schools whose building composition met the criteria determined for inclusion. Random selection was
conducted in a process of ensuring equal representation of the four quadrant area of suburban Cook County. All except two of the schools selected on the first run agreed to be part of the study. Principals were asked by phone if they were willing to submit to an individual interview conducted in their office. Interview appointments were scheduled by phone. Letters confirming the date and time of the interview appointment were sent.

All but two interviews were conducted in a single session lasting from one hour and twenty minutes to two and half hours. Two interviews were split into two sessions. The average interview was one hour and forty minutes. Interviews were taped so that comments and data could be clarified later if necessary. In addition notes were taken while the interview was being conducted. Some of the respondents were called later to clarify responses or to provide more in depth insight to an area.

Interviews were conducted in the following manner. In the opening comments the nature of the study was explained. A description of the format of the interview was provided. Confidentiality issues were discussed. The principals were reminded of the length of the interview. Permission was requested to call the principals at a later point should aspects of the data need to be clarified. All principals indicated that they would be available and willing to discuss the data further at a later point.
Flexibility was encouraged and permitted during interviews. Respondents were permitted to discuss other associated topics if they felt they were relative to the question of interest. Respondents were asked additional questions beyond the structured interview questions if more data were necessary to clarify a point, move into "uncharted new territory" relative to empowerment, or to gain more in depth knowledge and insight about particular areas.

Methods of Interview Data Analysis

The Conceptual Framework

The data gained from the interviews were analyzed using qualitative methods of analysis. The first step in focusing the analysis of data in research conducted with qualitative methods of inquiry was to choose a conceptual framework. This step was particularly important given the fact that the construct of empowerment has not yet been fully developed or operationalized.

Although there has been much written in recent years about the concept of empowerment as it relates to management and leadership, the literature must be synthesized and analyzed to develop a definition of empowerment as it relates to school organizations. A review of the existing literature was presented in the
"Review of Relevant Literature Section."

As noted in that section, the research on empowerment is at times confusing. Therefore, it was critical to determine a conceptual framework to focus the analysis of this study. Miles and Huberman note the importance of choosing a conceptual framework and describe its use.

Theory-building relies on a few general constructs which subsume many particulars. A conceptual framework explains either graphically or in narrative form, the main dimensions to be studied—the key relationships among them. Frameworks can be rudimentary or elaborate, theory-driven or commonsensical, descriptive or causal.

This study’s conceptual framework was supported by literature from several areas: studies on power, powerlessness, empowerment, professionalism, organizational effectiveness and organizational structures. Each of these helped define the construct of empowerment and assisted in identifying the leadership process which employs it.

The literature on these areas, (power, powerlessness and the little available on empowerment), together assist in defining the construct of empowerment and the reasons for its use in organizations. The word empower derives its usage from the concept of power. Therefore studies on power are key. The literature on

powerlessness was also included, for empowering actions should be directed at areas of real or potential powerlessness.

The literature on professionalism provides the foundation for understanding the significance of empowerment in relation to professional educators. The literature on organizational structures and conditions relating to effectiveness lend support to the significance of empowerment and the work culture that supports it and shed light on the process of empowering.

Focusing the Study

Given this conceptual framework, the next step was to focus the study on the relationship between middle school principals and their superintendents. In looking for some guidance to direct this line of inquiry, the manner in which other researchers focused studies on empowerment proved to be both enlightening as well as confusing.

For example, management theorists are typically interested in the concept of empowerment from the perspective of organizational effectiveness. Their focus of inquiry usually centers around the decision making process in organizations or other isolated components of
the definition of empowerment. Social scientists have dealt with the subject by focusing on issues related to powerlessness of minority groups. Others have focused on the methods and structures of governance which serve to assist individuals in becoming more viable members of political structures.

Some anthropologists and sociologists have looked at the concept of citizen empowerment. These studies focus on emerging citizen leaders in grass roots organizations. Adult learning and adult development as it

201 Fanon, G. The Wretched of the Earth. New York: Grove Press. 1968.
relates to the concept of participatory competence is at the foundation of these studies. No study ties it all together to clearly operationalize a definition of the construct.

Though the literature on empowerment covers a broad range of topics and points of focus, there is at least one common theme among these studies. In every discussion of empowerment there is a reference to conceptualizing the condition from which it evolves and targeting empowerment strategies to that condition. The condition from which it evolves is a sense of powerlessness. The idea of looking at organizational and personal powerlessness as a focal point to study empowerment between superintendents and middle school principals began to direct my inquiries.

Seeman's definition of powerlessness provides a general understanding of the concept of powerlessness. He defines it as the "expectancy held by an individual that his own behavior will not successfully impact the occurrence of the outcomes he seeks."203

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Freire's conceptions are also instructive. In his view, the individual becomes powerless in assuming the role of "object" acted upon by the environment, rather than "subject" acting in and on the world. As such, the individual alienates himself from participation in the construction of a social/environmental reality.\textsuperscript{204}

Powerlessness, according to Freire is the surrender to a "culture of silence" and a passive acceptance of oppressive cultural "givens". Powerlessness implies an individual's loss of a sense of control in terms of social or organizational relations. In a similar vein Gaventa refers to this phenomenon as one of "acquiescence."\textsuperscript{205}

Therefore, the theme of powerlessness became a logical starting point from which to look at the concept of empowerment. This study focused around areas hypothesized to be a potential source of powerlessness between principals and superintendents. A very recent study by Conger and Kanungo guided efforts in identifying the specific potential areas of powerlessness between middle school principals and their superintendents.\textsuperscript{206}


These researchers identify four areas which have the potential of presenting conditions which lead to a psychological state of powerlessness. They make suggestions for beginning an inquiry of empowerment.

General areas of potential powerlessness cited by these authors include:

- organizational structure
- supervision
- reward systems
- nature of job

Conger and Karungo’s general areas of potential powerlessness combined with the research on empowerment prompted the selection of six areas of interaction between superintendents and middle school principals that have the potential of resulting in a sense of powerlessness. The six areas became the focus for my study on empowerment. I refer to these areas throughout the study as the focus areas of the study. Each of the six meets the following criteria.

- It is an area where superintendents and principals have opportunities to interact.

- It is an area that I hypothesize to have the potential of creating a sense of powerlessness. Stated differently, it is an area where empowerment is a useful construct to consider.

- A definition and clear description of the area is present in the relevant research on empowerment.

The six areas which focused the review of the literature, data collection and analysis of empowerment
between middle school principals and their superintendents follow.

Six Focus Areas

Defining Empowerment in this Study

- Organizational Belief System and Work Culture
- Process of Decision Making and Problem Solving
- Administrative Work Group
- Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated
- Setting of District Mission and Building Goals
- Plan for Evaluation and Professional Growth

Specific Steps of Analysis

Once completed, data from the interviews were analyzed in the following manner. First, notes on the interview were typed. The interview tapes were used to fill in any gaps in the written notes as well as to provide depth to the process of summarizing the interview and writing out exact quotes where necessary.

The second step was to complete a contact summary sheet on each interview. This is a two sheet form used to focus and summarize questions about the contact. This sheet provided summary information about some key areas:

- the people, events, or situations involved relative to each area of inquiry
- main themes and issues in the contact
- data which responds to any of the research questions
- new hypotheses, speculations about areas related to the research
- additional information needed from the respondent or areas to explore with the other respondents

The contact summary sheet was filled out as soon as the fully written out field notes were completed and reviewed.

The third step in analyzing the data was to use a method of reflective comments. As the write-up of data was being produced and at the completion of the write-up reflections of several types became apparent. These included:

- comments on the relationship between principals and others in regard to the empowerment process.
- reflections on the meaning of what the respondent is saying.
- issues related to the quality and depth of data recorded.
- additional hypothesis or comments on pre-existing hypotheses.
- cross-allusions to something else in the data.
- relationship of the research to what is being said by the respondent.
- researcher's own feeling about what is being said.
- elaboration or clarification of something said.
Drawing and Verifying Conclusions

Meaning from the data collected in the interviews was arrived at in several ways. First, counting of themes or situations in data was used to look at issues related to frequency and consistency. Counting helps to "see what you have," to verify a hypothesis, and to protect against bias. Findings were reported both in terms of their basic themes and in terms of numbers of times present in the data. In that way, a sense of something being consistent, recurrent or significant can be supported.

Second, clustering was completed to subsume individual situations, incidents, remarks into larger categories which assisted in conceptualizing the data. Phenomenon is better understood in this way by combining it with other incidents, remarks etc, which have similar patterns or characteristics. It is a way to move to higher level of abstraction by subsuming particulars into the general.

Third, metaphors were generated which served to amplify and depict rather than simply describing information. The language of metaphor is figurative and explanatory. They are effective data reducing devices because they take several particulars and make a single generality of them. Metaphors also assist in making patterns. They provide a singular descriptions of multiple incidents. They tie phenomenon together.
Methods of Survey Data Analysis

The SPSSX statistical applications package was used to present the survey data. Data were presented covering several areas. Analysis was completed on each area.

Presentation and analysis of data included the following:

a. correlational matrix of the six focus areas of empowerment in both current and desired status.

b. personal data presented in frequency distributions.

c. analysis of variance between the various aspects of the personal data and reported and desired states of empowerment.

d. three measures of significance, Bonferroni T-test, Student Newman Keuls and Tukey's Studentized Range to identify means, standard deviations and variance in each of the six focus areas current and desired states and to determine statistical significance within reported differences between current and desired states of empowerment.

In completing this analysis the following statistical techniques were applied:

- Frequency Response Analysis
- ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)
- Student-Newman-Keuls Test
- Tukey’s Studentized Range Test
- Bonferroni T- Test
- MANOVA (Multiple Analysis of Variance)
- Analysis of Variance and Co-Variance with Repeated Measures.
- Pearson Correlational Coefficient
CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter reports and analyzes the study’s findings. Two methods were used to collect data. The first was a mailed survey and the second was the individual structured interview. Both data collection instruments were developed using the research assimilated in the Review of Related Literature. (The data collection instruments are described in Chapter Three. The instruments themselves are in the Appendix of this study.)

This chapter is introduced by restating each of the research questions and relating how the analysis addresses them.

The research questions were:

1. How is middle school principal empowerment defined and its process characterized specific to six potential areas of powerlessness, the six focus areas of the study?

2. What do middle school principals report to be the current status of empowerment as they experience it in their relationship with the superintendent? Contrast this with the
3. What conditions enable and inhibit the empowerment process as experienced by middle school principals?

Structure of Chapter IV

This chapter has ten sections. Section I summarizes and analyzes principal responses to both data collection methods. Section II presents a summary of the personal data of the interview and survey respondents. This is done through summary tables. The analysis of the personal data follows that.

Section III presents general data gained from the mailed survey. These were used to draw general conclusions about the results of the study and provided a base from which to explore further the three research questions. The following tables are included in this section:

- Explanation of Notations, Abbreviations for Six Focus Areas of Empowerment
- Correlation Matrix for Six Categories/Current and Desired State
- Statistics for Scale/Six Categories of Empowerment Current and Desired State
- Correlational Coefficients/Six Categories of Empowerment/Current and Desired State
- Analysis of Variance for Six Areas/Current and Desired State
- Pearson Correlation Coefficients
Analysis of the data follows the presentation of the tables.

The next six sections, IV-IX, analyze both the survey and the interview data regarding middle school principal empowerment as reported by middle school principals in suburban Cook County. Each section focuses on just one of the six focus areas of the study. The six areas which focus this study of empowerment are:

* Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment
* Decision-Making and Problem Solving
* Administrative Work Group
* Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated
* Mission and Goal Setting
* Principal Evaluation and Professional Growth

The structure of each of sections IV-IX follows the same format. First, the interview data are presented in narrative form. The remarks pertaining to the specific focus area are summarized for each of the fifteen principals. Their remarks are labeled, Principal One, Two and so on. Next, the survey data relative to the focus area are presented in tables. The headings of the tables are the same for each section. Table headings for the mailed survey data for each focus area include:

- Means/Standard Deviation for Current Status
- Means/Standard Deviation for Desired State
- Student Newman Keuls Test of Significance
- Tukey's Studentized Range Test
- Bonferroni T-test
- Summary Ranking of Participant Score/Current State
- Summary Ranking of Participant Scores/Desired State
- Survey Questions Relative to the Focus Area

The last step in Sections IV-IX is to analyze each of the three research questions in terms of each of the six focus areas of empowerment.

Due to the nature of research question one, (analysis of the question requires data gained from open-ended inquiries) only the interview data are used to support conclusions and analysis to this question. Both sets of data, interview and survey, form the basis for analysis to research questions two and three. When data are mentioned in the analysis, it is specified as to what source they are from, interview or survey data.

The last section of this chapter, section X, treats the data gained from the only open-ended question on the mailed survey and the very last question asked in principal interviews. This question reads,

Are there areas where you experience a sense of powerlessness to make desired changes? Please identify these and describe the problem.

This section summarizes the data collected from this question by presenting the narrative responses of the principals interviewed followed by a frequency distribution summarizing the results of this same question on the
survey. An analysis of both sets of data closes this section and this chapter.

In conclusion, the following is a summary of the specific structure of presenting the findings and analysis of this study.

Outline of Chapter IV

Section I

Summary and Analysis of Principal Responses to both Data Collection Methods

Section II

Summary of the Responses to Personal Data from the Survey and Interview

Analyses of these Data

Section III

Summary of Data Gained from Survey Instrument

Analyses of these Data

Section IV

Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment

Summary of Interview Data

Summary of Survey Data

Combined Analysis
Section V  Decision Making and Problem Solving

Summary of Interview Data
Summary of Survey Data
Combined Analysis

Section VI  Administrative Work Group

Summary of Interview Data
Summary of Survey Data
Combined Analysis

Section VII  Responsibilities Assigned or Delegated

Summary of Interview Data
Summary of Survey Data
Combined Analysis

Section VIII  Setting of District Mission and Building Goals

Summary of Interview Data
Summary of Survey Data
Combined Analysis

Section IX  Principal Evaluation and Six Plan for Professional Growth

Summary of Interview Data
Summary of Survey Data
Combined Analysis

Section X  Response to Additional Areas of Powerlessness Experienced by Middle School Principals.

Summary of Interview Data
Summary of Survey Data
Combined Analysis

Section I  Summary and Analysis of Principal Responses to both Data Collection Methods

Two methods of collecting data were utilized in this study. The first was a survey mailed to the middle school principals in suburban Cook County. The second method was individual interviews. Both these methods are described at length in Chapter Three of this study.

Surveys were mailed to one hundred ten principals. Sixty usable surveys were returned. Participants for the most part seemed to have no problem completing the survey. Two thirds of the respondents requested a copy of the findings when they became available.

Fifteen interviews were scheduled with individual principals. Participants who participated in individual interviews seemed to have no problem understanding the nature of what was asked in the interview. Two preliminary
interviews were conducted to pilot the interview techniques. Modifications were made to clarify a few questions of the study following these interviews. After the start of the fifteen interviews, new insights to a few areas were gained. These insights prompted the addition of a couple of questions. Since these additional questions were not asked of the first few respondents, they were contacted again by phone and responded to the additional questions so that their responses could be included.
## Section II

**Summary of the Responses to Personal Data from the Survey and Interview**

### Table 1  YEARS IN ADMINISTRATION

#### Value Labels

1 = 1 thru 5  
2 = 6 thru 10  
3 = 11 thru 15  
4 = 16 thru 30  

#### Survey Data

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### TABLE 2  YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION

**Value Labels**

1 = 1 thru 3  
2 = 4 thru 6  
3 = 7 thru 10  
4 = 11 thru 30

**Survey Data**

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### Table 3: Years as a Middle School Principal

**Value Labels**

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2 = 6 thru 10  
3 = 11 thru 15  
4 = 16 thru 25

**Survey Data**

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### TABLE 4  YEARS WITH PRESENT SUPERINTENDENT

**Value Label**

**Value=Number of years**

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</table>
**TABLE 5  DID THE SUPERINTENDENT HIRE YOU?**

**Value Label**

1 = Yes  
2 = No

**Survey Data**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Cum. Percent</th>
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**Interview Data**

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<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>59.94</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>
**Table 6: Where are you in your career?**

**Value Label**

1 = Beginning  
2 = Middle  
3 = End

**Survey Data**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cum. Percent</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
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TABLE 7 WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?

Value Label
1 = Male
2 = Female

Survey Data

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Interview Data

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<td>5</td>
<td>33.4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 8 WHY WERE YOU HIRED?

**Value Label**

1 = Experience  
2 = Best Qualified  
3 = Particular Expertise  
4 = Already in District

**Survey Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum. Percent</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>
### Table 9: How Many Students in the District?

#### Value Labels

1 = 1 thru 5000  
2 = 5001 thru 10000  
3 = 10001 thru 15000  
4 = 15001 thru 20000  
5 = 20001 thru 30000

#### Survey Data

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#### Interview Data

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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>
### Table 10: How Many Students in the Building?

**Value Labels**

1 = 1 thru 300  
2 = 301 thru 500  
3 = 501 thru 800  
4 = 801 thru 1000  
5 = 1001 thru 1500

**Survey Data**

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TABLE 11 WHAT GRADE LEVELS ARE IN YOUR BUILDING?

Value Labels

1 = 5 thru 8  
2 = 6 thru 8  
3 = 7 thru 8

Survey Data

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Interview Data

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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>53.28</td>
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### TABLE 12  HOW MANY MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT?

**Value Labels**

**Value** = Number of Middle Schools

**Survey Data**

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**Interview Data**

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TABLE 13  HOW MANY ATTENDANCE CENTERS IN THE DISTRICT?

Value Labels

1 = 1 thru 5
2 = 6 thru 10
3 = 11 thru 15
4 = 16 thru 25

Survey Data

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Interview Data

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.7</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
### Table 14: What is the Socio-Economic Makeup of Your Student Body?

**Value Labels**

1 = Affluent (Median Family Income over 38,000)
2 = Middle  (Median Family Income 20,00 to 37,999)
3 = Low to Poverty (Median Family Income below 19,999)

**Survey Data**

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<th>Cum. Percent</th>
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**Interview Data**

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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19.98</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of the Personal Data

Within the survey data, respondents were close to evenly divided between those with less than fifteen years of experience, a total of 47%, and those with sixteen years or more. A similar range of respondents was found within the interview data; 47% had 15 years of experience or less. The interview data have 20% respondents with one to five years of administrative experience. The corresponding statistic for the survey data was 8%

Sizable percentages in both the interview and survey data were relatively new to their current position. 32% of the respondents in the survey sample were in their current positions from one to three years while 33% of the interview respondents held positions a similar length of time.

40% of the survey participants and 32% of the interview participants held positions eleven to thirty years, with the majority holding the spot eighteen years or more. Smaller percentages were noted in the seven to ten year range. It appeared from these data that middle school principals were almost evenly divided by two extremes: those very new in their current positions and those who have held the same position for quite some time.

The statistic regarding years as a middle school principal indicated that principals held other middle
school principalships prior to their current position.

A fairly sizable portion worked with the present superintendent less than two years, 38% of the survey data and 40% of the interview participants. This relatively high statistic was probably associated with the high rate of superintendent turnover. The rest of the cases were spread out with single cases from three to twenty-two years.

The survey data indicated similarity in responses to whether or not the respondent was hired by the current superintendent. 52% indicated they had, while 48% indicated they had not. Similar findings were present in the interview population. 40% were hired by the current superintendent, 60% were not.

As changes occur in the individual holding the superintendent position in many district so are changes in the person holding the principalship. Experienced principals were the ones most frequently getting hired for newly opened positions. Principals were making job changes early in their careers. Fewer changes were occurring after a principal worked in that role in excess of 11 years.

Few principals responding to the survey, 5%, or in the interview data 0%, indicated they were in the beginning of their careers. Respondents were primarily in the middle of their careers, 63% of the survey respondents and 67% of the interview respondents fit that description. Obviously,
districts have been hiring and retaining more experienced educators and not placing individuals in those positions early in their careers.

The majority of the middle school principals responding to the survey were male, 87%. 67% of the interviews were with men.

The majority of middle school principals were in districts of 5,000 or fewer students. 80% of the survey participants and 74% of the interview participants were in this category. Approximately 11% of the survey and interview respondents were in districts with 5001 to 10000 students. Individual building student populations within the survey group were evenly divided between those with 500 or fewer in their building, 50% and those with populations between 500 and 800, 47%. Only 3% were in buildings of populations greater than 800. These figures reflect the population in the larger Cook County suburban area.

Nine of the fifteen interviews were conducted in buildings with populations between 500 and 800. Four were in buildings between 300 and 500. There was one interview in a building with a student population between 800 and 1100 and one with a population over 1100. The random selection of principals interviewed was found to be representative of the building populations found in the larger sample of all suburban middle schools in Cook County, Illinois.
The most popular grade constellation for middle schools was 6th - 8th. 48% of the survey respondents and 40% of the interview respondents indicated this was their grade constellation. 35% of survey and 53% of the interview participants indicated their schools were made up of 7th - 8th grades.

Respondents gave a variety of reasons for why they were hired. Of interest was that those who held their positions for shorter periods of time, less than five years, tended to respond they were hired for a particular area of expertise. e.g. change the school from a junior high building to a middle school or improve the language arts program or deal with the discipline problem. Those holding their positions longer indicated they were hired due to their experience or that they were the best qualified for the position.

Beyond the descriptive information relevant to the personal data sections of the survey and interviews, other points of interest surfaced during principal interviews. These are included in the particular area, e.g. belief system and work culture, to which they are relevant.

The preliminary step in investigating the possibility of significant variance noted between a particular aspect of the personal data and the reported current or desired status of empowerment was to complete frequency distributions. Frequency distributions noted
quantitative differences between certain areas. For example, those hired by the current superintendent reported a higher level of current empowerment than those not hired by the superintendent.

In order to analyze these frequency discrepancies further to determine evidence for statistically significant variance another step of statistical analysis was required. This was to complete an analysis of variance on each area of the personal data areas to determine if there was a significant difference in current status or desired status in any of the six areas of empowerment explored in this study.

With the exception of only one focus area, mission and goal setting, and one area of personal data, whether the principal was hired by the superintendent with whom he was now working, all aspects of the personal data were found not to be significantly different in accounting for differences in reported current status and desired state of empowerment. The single incident of statistically significant variance was: principals hired by the superintendent with whom they are now working desired more empowerment in mission and goal setting than their counterparts who were hired by a superintendent different from the current one.

The results of the series of ANOVA'S completed on the survey data, supported by the data gained from
principal interviews led to the conclusion that by and
large empowerment differences in either current or desired
state are not correlated with or the result of particular
principal characteristics. Rather, they seem to be more
accurately accounted for by the manner in which principals
and superintendents interact.

This has some far reaching implications for
principal/superintendent empowerment. First, in regard to
training it implies that superintendents and principals
whether new or old to their position or career can learn
the tools of empowerment.

This point became apparent during principal
interviews. One third of principals, reported experiencing
differences in their current status of empowerment over a
short period of time due to a change in superintendents,
rather than to some significant change in their personal
characteristics. Still others reported their desire for
empowerment increased when the nature of
superintendent/principal interactions were altered.

These interview findings provided further insight
on this point. In these data, rather than empowerment
being reported in isolation and linked to a particular
characteristic of personal data, e.g. young principals
desiring more empowerment or older principals being more
desirous of the status quo, reported changes in current or
desired states of empowerment appear linked to other
external catalysts. e.g. newly hired superintendent.

These catalysts became renewal points for generating a heightened desire for empowerment. The principals interviewed reported empowering interactions were implemented without changing all the "main players" in the district.

Specific catalysts reported in the interview data resulting in increased empowerment activity were found to be initiated both by the principal and the superintendent. Specific catalysts included principals who made it known to their superintendent that they were seeking new positions with added or different responsibilities. Their superintendents responded by increasing empowering strategies toward these principals in the presumed hope of encouraging them to stay in the district.

Still other principals interviewed stated that simply being new to a district can be a catalyst to increased empowerment. Superintendents new to the district were able to initiate change in the level of empowerment experienced by principals. New superintendents seemed also to be able to stimulate an increased desire for empowerment on the part of some principals. Newly hired principals who let their requirements for empowerment be known during their interviews with the superintendent can stimulate change in the level of superintendent empowerment activity. This was shown not only in terms of how empowering tactics
were directed toward the new principal but also were reported to be directed toward other members of the administrative group.

Newly hired principals participating in interviews related that they told their superintendent what they wanted and needed from him prior to being hired. That, in their minds, ensured increased possibilities of empowerment.

Section III Summary of Data Gained from the Survey Instrument

TABLE 15

EXPLANATION OF NOTATIONS

Abbreviation for Six Areas of Empowerment/Current Status

CULC Culture and Belief System Conducive to Empowerment
AMSC Administrative Work Group
PDEC Principal Evaluation and Professional Growth
MGSC Mission and Goal Setting
DECC Decision Making and Problem Solving
DORC Responsibilities Delegated or Assigned
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<th>PDEC</th>
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<td>0.7727</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECC</td>
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<td>0.8011</td>
<td>0.5760</td>
<td>0.7050</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
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<tr>
<td>DORC</td>
<td>0.8629</td>
<td>0.8218</td>
<td>0.7599</td>
<td>0.7774</td>
<td>0.7898</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
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</table>
## TABLE 17

**STATISTICS FOR SCALE/SIX CATEGORIES/CURRENT STATUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th># of Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>141.1833</td>
<td>687.0675</td>
<td>26.2120</td>
<td>6</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Squared Multiple Correlation</th>
<th>Alpha if Item is Deleted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CULC</td>
<td>.8317</td>
<td>.9322</td>
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<td>AMSC</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDEC</td>
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<td>.9489</td>
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<tr>
<td>DORC</td>
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<td>.9312</td>
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### Table 18

**Analysis of Variance**

**Six Categories of Empowerment/Current Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between People</td>
<td>6756.2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>114.5</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within People</td>
<td>3907.5</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Measures</td>
<td>2097.9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>419.6</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1809.5</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>6.1</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonadditivity</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>1718.7</td>
<td>294</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10663.7</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>29.7</td>
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</table>

Grand Mean 23.5306

### Table 19

**Reliability Coefficients**

**Six Categories of Empowerment/Current Status**

Alpha = .9464  
Standardized Item Alpha = .9522
TABLE 20

EXPLANATION OF NOTATIONS

ABBREVIATION FOR SIX CATEGORIES OF EMPOWERMENT/
DESIRED STATE

CULD Culture and Belief System Conducive to Empowerment
AMSD Administrative Work Group
PDED Principal Evaluation and Professional Growth
MGSD Mission and Goal Setting
DECD Decision Making and Problem Solving
DORD Responsibilities Delegated or Assigned

TABLE 21

CORRELATION MATRIX FOR THE SIX CATEGORIES/DESIRED STATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CULD</th>
<th>AMSD</th>
<th>PDED</th>
<th>MGSD</th>
<th>DECD</th>
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<tr>
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<td>.5410</td>
<td>.4925</td>
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### Table 22

**Statistics for Scale/Six Categories/Desired State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>No. of Variables</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pded</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGSD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dord</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Squared Multiple Correlation

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culd</td>
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<td>.8370</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMSD</td>
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<td>PDED</td>
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<tr>
<td>DECd</td>
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</table>
### TABLE 23

#### ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

**SIX CATEGORIES OF EMPOWERMENT/DESIRED STATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Prob.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within People</td>
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<td>300</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between Measures</td>
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<td>675.5</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Nonadditivty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4962.4</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>13.8</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grand Mean** 27.7333

### TABLE 24

#### CORRELATIONAL COEFFICIENTS

**SIX CATEGORIES OF EMPOWERMENT/DESIRED STATE**

Reliability coefficients

Alpha = .8489  
Standardized Item Alpha = .8541
**TABLE 25**

**PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS - CURRENT/DESIRED**

Pearson Correlation Coefficients /
Prob > R Under HO:RHO=0 N=60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CULC</th>
<th>DECC</th>
<th>AMSC</th>
<th>MGSC</th>
<th>PDEC</th>
<th>DORC</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>DECD</td>
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<td>0.41966</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGSD</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>DORD</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.38917</td>
<td>0.0021</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Data

Gained from the Survey Instrument

The first goal of the study was to develop a definition of empowerment. The results presented in the correlational statistics gained from the survey instrument provided strength to the definition of empowerment used to focus this study.

Table 2 looks at the correlation between the six categories of empowerment in their current status. Correlations between the six focus areas were very high. Excepting the perfect correlations, 1.0 between like focus areas, all but one correlation were between .70 and .86. The correlation between DECC (Decision-Making and Problem Solving) and PDEC (Principal Evaluation and Professional Growth) was .58. By deleting one question that correlation rises to the .70 range. This indicated that the manner in which principals responded to the current status questions across the six focus areas of empowerment was highly similar.

In addition to this finding, the alpha for statistics for scale on current status averaged .95. This meant that any focus area of empowerment could be deleted and the alpha would not drop below .93. The conclusion was that each of the six focus areas of empowerment studied were found to be highly correlated to each other and no particular area was a single construct. Rather, these
data indicated a high association between areas. They were all found to be contributing members of one construct.

This was important for several reasons. It appeared from these data that empowerment should not be narrowly defined to one area (e.g. administrative work relationships.) Six areas contributed to an understanding of this construct. To gain a broad understanding of the current or desired state of empowerment between middle school principals and their superintendent it was necessary to evaluate all areas.

Similar findings were reported in desired status. The alpha for the desired scale across the six categories was .85. No individual scale alpha dropped below .80 if a category of desired state was deleted from the scale. Two alphas, CULD (culture and belief system) and PDED (principal evaluation and professional growth) were as high as .84 and .85 respectively.

Again, as noted in current status, these data indicated that this study did not measure six separate constructs but rather six focus areas of one construct. Confirming these ideas further the Pearson Correlational Coefficients ranged from .0001 to .0173 indicating that no category in current status or desired state stood out as an independent variable. The categories in both desired and current status exhibited an interrelationship and indicated they were all part of one construct and not more than one.
The analysis of variance of the six categories in their current status revealed a grand mean of 23.5. The grand mean for the six categories/desired state was 27.7. The statistics for scale for the six categories in the current status noted a mean of 141.2, variance, 687.1 and standard deviation of 26.2. The desired state statistics for scale for the six categories noted a mean of 166.3, variance of 91.8 and standard deviation of 9.6.

These findings are interesting. Several conclusions can be drawn. First, a difference in means was found between current and desired states in all six focus areas of this study. In each of the areas principals desired increased empowerment. This difference proved to be statistically significant using three different measures of significance on data gained from the mailed survey. The tests used were Tukey’s Studentized Range, Bonferroni T-test, and Student Newman Keuls. Data from these tests are presented in sections IV-IX of this study.

Second, both the survey data and the interview data revealed a wide disparity in the reported current status of empowerment. Standard deviations and variance were high. This indicated that principals were in very different places on the continuum of current status of empowerment. This was true for each of the six focus areas of empowerment.

Third, though both the survey and interview
participants were found to desire increased levels of empowerment in each of the six focus areas, the degree of desired increase varied across individual principals as well as across the six focus areas of the study.

The interview data provided some insights into the reason for this. Principals differed in terms of their desire to seek out increased responsibility and autonomy across different focus areas. A given principal did not consistently define the construct of power from a perspective supportive of empowerment.

Problems in showing evidence of supporting a definition of power that was conducive to empowerment were seen in several comments made in interviews. These will be highlighted. Some principals had apprehensions regarding their skill/ability to handle increased empowerment in a given area. Others preferred not to participate in the process necessary to become empowered in a given focus area. Other principals perceived the long term results of empowerment to be threatening. Issues related to their own professional control proved to be the most frequently mentioned threatening aspect of empowerment.

Concerns related to principal control issues were expressed in questions or statements made by principals during the course of their interviews. Questions posed by principals included, "If principals share power with the superintendent would he expect the same level of sharing
between teachers and principal?" Other concerns related to skill and ability to handle a task. "If the superintendent were to empower principals to be involved in district issues would principals be held accountable for these areas"? "Would these same areas be more difficult to control than building matters"? Still other principals feared empowerment might permit penetration into their, at times, comfortable isolation. These principals appeared particularly hesitant at the prospect of increased superintendent involvement in mutual goal setting.

Finally, the survey data presented in this section indicated that the greatest disparity between current and desired state of empowerment was evident in the focus area of principal evaluation and professional growth. The least disparity between current and desired state was in the area of responsibilities assigned to the principal.
section IV  

Belief System and Work Culture  

Conducive to Empowerment  

Summary of Interview Data  

principal #1  

To principal 1, empowerment meant the degree of power the superintendent gave the principal. He felt that degree of power was contingent on how much the board of education gives the superintendent. He described it as a type of exchange. "You tend to give what you get."

Principal #1 felt empowerment is a good thing to have since it helped define flexibility in the district. "If one is empowered, one tends to be able to be more flexible on the job."

The significance of empowerment for this respondent was based in the premise that if you are not empowered you "have nothing to share with your staff."

He (superintendent) gets power from the board. You get it from him. Principals need to be empowered by their superintendents in order to share power with their teachers.

This principal's long term goals focused on dealing with the processing of changing his school from a junior high to a middle school. This plan involved changes in curriculum, staff, philosophy and the grade level constellation in the building. The plan was scheduled for implementation during the next two school years. This was
the pilot year of the program.

Besides altering the current structure to a middle school, this principal was to develop a plan for staff development which will assist his staff in the changes to come. Both the faculty and the community have expressed unreadiness to accept the changes associated with the middle school concept. He reported that change was difficult for both of these groups.

In order for the superintendent to assist the principal in reaching his goals, the respondent felt the superintendent should focus on principal development. For the respondent this included a focus both on the principal's building goals and his professional development goals. There was a newly created assistant superintendent position in this district whose role was to provide principal support and development.

The principal developer provided the principal with at least one goal per year and was actively involved with the feedback and evaluation of the other goals that were created. This principal liked this program. He felt the newly created position was a wise idea. He liked the continual and ongoing support and involvement of the district office.

He reported that it was not always like this. The central office was not always positively involved at the building level. Previous superintendents either isolated
themselves from the work at the building level or were attentive only at times of crisis. The respondent felt the superintendent should be involved with helping to set a direction for principals. In so doing, "principals will know where they stand. Things are clear." In closing, principal #1 felt it was very likely that he will achieve his long terms goals.

The power structure in the district, was described as somewhat different than a traditional line/staff power structure. The newly created position of assistant superintendent for principal development has significantly altered the way the district operates. This position was unique in that the primary responsibility of this position was to offer clinical support and exchange with the principals. The principal reported that the way things "really work" in the district involved everyone "talking and hammering things out." He described an environment where there was sharing of power.

There are plenty of opportunities to give your point of view. The bottom line rests with the superintendent. Your opinion is heard. There is not always agreement, but you always have the chance to try to persuade the others.

This arrangement was reported to work well for this principal. He gave as an example, a recent incident where he felt the superintendent surprised the principals in the district with a direction which was different from the one the principal had been planning with his staff for a long
No prior communication was given on the new plan. It was just handed down by the superintendent. Simply a directive. I was upset. I brought it up at a meeting. I reminded him of our ten tenets of good communication. The ten tenets are a guiding philosophy, if you will, that we developed together. In this particular instance I felt he really violated the tenets. The decision was eventually turned around.

The principal reported that the central office apologized for the way they handled the situation. "They knew they had made a mistake." He concluded with the idea that if there is a problem in the district there is process by which you can straighten it out.

The principal made no recommendations for change. Rather, he would maintain the positive points of what was already present.

Basically, things are running pretty well. I would just like to make sure that principals are able to have discretion at the building level and get the resources they need. If you have nothing to give your teachers it is difficult to obtain their support. If a building is not recognized by central office it affects morale and motivation.

Principal #2

Principal #2 defined empowerment as the authority to make decisions. He stated that it was the amount of influence one or the other of two parties had in making a decision. This respondent went into some particulars
regarding the use of power and the role of empowerment. He felt there were times when the superintendent should use power in the bureaucratic sense of the word. However, a great deal of latitude should be permitted whenever possible. Principal #2 reported that this was usually the case for him. He added that "one should not screw up with the latitude provided, however, or you will find yourself accountable." He added that "this is the way it should be."

This principal’s long term goals included changing the physical lay-out of the building. The building was built as a junior high and the school has changed over to a middle school. The principal wants to re-design the building to accommodate a middle school concept, not the original K - 8 plan.

A second long term goal was to develop what he calls "more sophisticated inservice training for teachers." He described a need to utilize coaching techniques in staff development.

As the interview went on, additional goals were cited by the principal. One of this was to improve student discipline. The principal was very proud of what he and his staff have done with discipline. He gave an example. Speakers can come here and speak to four hundred kids and the kids will be great. They cannot do that in other schools.
He felt the increase in transfers to his building from the parochial schools was related to his tight discipline.

Another goal mentioned later in the interview was to improve the block system of courses in the building. The school offers foreign languages, study skills, novel and literature courses. The principal would like to see this selection expanded.

Regarding superintendent involvement in the middle school principal's goals, this respondent stated that he and the superintendent were in continual communication about goals. (Later in the interview, he contradicted this point and identified several areas where there are significant problems between the superintendent and him in communication and goal setting.)

On the positive side, the principal said that he and the superintendent worked together with teachers toward achieving building and district goals.

We have set aside fourteen SAD days (Staff Articulation Days) per year. We keep teachers after school till 4:00 p.m. and work on various tasks in support of our goals.

In closing this principal said he "wasn't sure about the likelihood of achieving his long term goals." He reminded the interviewer that "times were tough and things are different now."

Principal #2 described a traditional organizational structure, with some tight controls established by the
superintendent. He stated, "he, (superintendent) deals with our concerns mostly in isolation.

We talk about things together but a lot gets done by individual conversations with the superintendent. I don't feel there is any ill will between the superintendent and I. I do not feel any threat of recrimination.

I am not sure what happens between the supt. and the other principals. I just don't know. As a group, we just never solve anything of substance together. The "super" keeps the controls.

In using power in this district each principal has to develop his own set of guidelines with the superintendent, his own way of interacting.

If you make a significant mistake you lose power. You are accountable. If you misuse power you have to deal with it. If you present an argument for what you want you may get it.

Regarding changes, this principal recommended significantly improving and altering the style of communication in the district.

If it were up to me, there would be more group interaction, more discussion of goals, more input by the superintendent, less fear of the unknown, more out on the table.

He concluded with the statement,

Sometimes I am not sure how he (the superintendent) will react to things. Though he is supportive individually with me, he probably won't go out on a limb. As it is we don't take risks. If things got really tough....I don't know....
Principal #3 stated she had a vague impression about the meaning of empowerment. She defined it as the authority to go ahead. She described its process as one where you are afforded the opportunity to develop a plan and supervise it. She found a relationship between empowerment and the manner of structuring the organization at the central office level. The significance of empowerment for this principal was in the authority it provides.

As a long term goals, principal #3 wished to improve upon some specific programs. She wanted to extend the computer science program. She felt a better guidance program for the junior high teachers was also needed. She wished to establish more rapport with kids. She spoke of the importance of keeping materials and the school aides updated. The principal reported she was working hard at instructional improvement to meet the goals set by the state.

A significant impetus guiding the formulation of the building goals was the "child at-risk." Goals focused on developing a plan for the "misfit" in the system. She closed her discussion of goals with a reminder that, "we have to realistic about our society and not forget the
relevance of education to that society."

In describing the superintendent's involvement in her long term goals, this principal stated that the superintendent should, share in the discussion about goals. He should further ideas about other areas to explore. He should provide the encouragement for the principal and the staff. He should provide the support in terms of budget, and get funding, training, materials and personnel.

Respondent #3 stated she was retiring and felt that she had achieved most of what was possible. Though challenging, she felt her goals were realistic.

In this district there was a lean heirarchial structure, due to financial constraints. There was no assistant superintendent, no curriculum director, no director of special education. As a result, the principals in the district divided duties that are often handled by central office.

In solving problems and managing the team, the principal indicated that a "team management model" was utilized. She stated,

The top level works with four principals. There is none of this, you will do as I say. The superintendent will always listen. There is no bitterness if you disagree with him. If you go in with a logical plan you will get it.

I went to the superintendent with my plan for kids at-risk. It involved several components: notes to parents, after-school plan, etc. I outlined the plan to the superintendent, presented it to the educational committee,
surveyed parents to get more information. We wanted a work study program and more certified personnel to work with these kids. We got through the red tape of board, parents. We found the money and we are starting the program.

The principal felt the environment in which she worked was conducive to reaching her goals. She attributed that largely to her own personality. She actively seeds out the superintendent. He has responded well to her aggressive style. On the other hand, she commented that there was not much happening in the schools in the district, with more passive principals. The superintendent has a bit of a "laissez-faire" attitude with them.

She made these remarks,

I am the aggressive type. I let the superintendent know what we need. I am on top of things. Some of the others are not. He (superintendent) lets things go. When problems do occur, he hopes the problem shakes them into shape. In those instances I wish he was more aggressive in what he expects from all of us. Its great to permit lots of autonomy if you know what you are doing. But if you are lost...

Principal # 4

This respondent defined empowerment as the ability to make decisions relative to staff, curriculum budget and other significant areas. Most important, he stated that it was the ability to get the decisions implemented. He further implied that empowerment was tied to cooperative
ventures where individuals complimented one another. Their strengths should blend for an outcome. There must be mutual support. Without empowerment, principals cannot be successful with their goals.

The principal stated that he was working in a situation that has called attention to the significance of empowerment. Just three days prior to this interview, the superintendent was terminated. A new superintendent started one day later. The principal explained that the old superintendent was not even close to empowering principals. So far, he felt a positive, measurable change with the new superintendent, who he described as very empowering. (The old superintendent was the focus of this interview.)

This respondent's long term goals were to make adjustments to the changing population in his school. It was now more than 75% minority. The school used to have a larger enrollment and was better managed with a team approach, common preparation periods and teacher/administrative teams.

The principal wanted to develop a value clarification program for his student body and work to improve the self-esteem of his kids. At this point, he was not sure how successful he will be with his goals. The union wanted to move forward with some plans but certain pockets of teachers were resisting.
The principal felt that the superintendent should work to enable principals to be successful with their goals but reported that the superintendent did little to enable him.

The power structure in the district up to now has been very formal. Relationships have been very strained. The superintendent maintained a good deal of control. The central office had a great deal of knowledge and information that was kept at that level. There was a significant problem with funds in the district. Principals have quit asking for increases in budget.

Principal # 5

The principal defined empowerment as the means of allowing people to make decisions at the level they will be carried out. He included the idea that it was critically important to provide the responsibility to carry them out. The principal felt he has directly experienced the meaning and outcomes of empowerment. He succeeded a principal who was terminated because of his autocratic style. The search for a new principal was comprehensive, similar to a superintendent search. At the time the principal was hired, the district was looking for someone who would give more decision making power to teachers, with more autonomy and flexibility.
The principal indicated there was a significant degree of empowerment in the district. During the interview he gave multiple examples of where he felt empowered. In the beginning of the interview he focused on teacher empowerment and his ability to execute that level of empowerment. As the interview progressed he focused on his own empowerment and what that process entailed.

As examples of teacher level empowerment, he stated that all building committees are chaired with teachers. "Real work" was handled at the committee level, e.g., revision of the discipline code, identification of at-risk kids.

Site level empowerment grounded in principal empowerment was contingent on superintendent support and backing. This principal was interested in working in such a culture. When interviewing for this and other positions he specifically sought out evidence for an empowering work culture. In addition to being interviewed by the district, the principal felt he "interviewed the district, looking for certain characteristics."

The principal stated that he would not work in an environment where he was not empowered or not expected to empower others. He has experienced non-empowering situations (his former superintendent maintained a formal heirarchical, tightly controlling approach) and would not return to less than what he was experiencing at the time of
this interview.

Long term goals for this respondent included:

- looking at the manner in which the schedule is handled with the goal of incorporating more of a team approach.

- increasing and improving communication with parents.

- supporting the increased equipment needs of staff. (The building was not set up to handle the physical layout requirements of teaming.)

- looking at the use of technology in the district. Training staff in the advances of technology.

This principal felt it was very likely that he would be successful with his long term goals. He indicated that it was very important for the superintendent to support the principal’s long term goals. This principal felt that level of support was present. The support issue was discussed in the interview process as one of the reasons prompting the principal’s acceptance of this position.

Goals in this district were discussed formally with the associate superintendent who communicates frequently with the superintendent. The specifics of this process are described at more length in the evaluation section.

The principal said that all of his requests for capital outlay expenditures have been approved by the superintendent. The principal felt being new to the district had something to do with his success. He didn’t find the same degree of aggressive response to some of the
other principals in the district. He was not sure if their requests were denied or if they had even made any. At any rate, this respondent felt that his "empowerment" was positively correlated with the superintendent's desire to show an investment in him.

In terms of the use of power in the district, the principal felt the size of this district played a significant role. The district was one of the largest in the state of Illinois. The district has an associate superintendent whose role was to handle the daily management of principals. The deputy superintendent was the business manager. The superintendent oversaw the entire operation. Principals in this district had as much communication with the associate superintendent as they did with the superintendent.

Power was utilized in the district in a "participatory style." There were weekly meetings, lasting two to three hours. The participatory style built trust. Trust, according to this respondent was necessary for empowerment to be successful.

Further examples of how power was directed and handled in the district were evident in the manner in which information was handled. All principals received an agenda several days before the administrative meeting. The agenda was set by the superintendent with principal input. The superintendent did not chair the administrative meetings in
this district. That role was shared by the administrative team. Meetings were always scheduled the same day of the week, at the same time. School principals, their assistants, central office administrators and all district personnel who have supervisory responsibilities attended these meetings.

The principals met as a group by themselves twice per month. It was this principal’s impression that this was not a common practice. "Some superintendents distrust these types of meetings and do not allow them."

Administrative meetings were "run like a corporation." Due to the district’s size, there were several layers of administration, each was responsible for coordinating their area. That responsibility was evident at the administrative meeting, where various central office personnel chaired the discussion relevant to their areas.

The outcome of this use of power "benefited the district." An example of the benefits cited by the principal was the recent passing of a sixty eight million dollar referendum. He attributed the passing of the referendum to the tight coordination in the district. He noted that surrounding districts did not pass their referenda in the same election.

Another outcome of both the use of power and the size of the district was that the superintendent was less involved in "a visible show of power at the building
level." His emphasis was on district coordination. "Individual teachers may feel they are far removed from the top level of central administration." According to the principal, "The key then is for building principals to create a sense within their teachers that the principal is their access to central office." Teachers did not feel this in the past. It was a change in process.

Our process of teacher empowerment is still new. Teacher involvement is still in the planning stages. As we get near to implementation on more projects, hopefully they will feel more a sense of power. Change takes time. What the superintendent is doing is visionary but more must see the evolving of the process before they believe in it.

Principal # 6

This principal defined empowerment "as the ability to make decisions on your own if the decisions are related to your job responsibility. It is different than involvement or simply participation." The principal noted, "Empowerment is important to the role of the middle school principal. If empowered, principals should have control over decisions impacting the day to day operation of the school." The principal pointed out that this included personnel, budget etc. "The superintendent should only step in as needed."

The principal indicated his superintendent has
permitted some "elbow room" in decision making but there were some concerns in other related areas. The respondent stated,

Empowerment entails having no sacred cows, no set agenda. Discussions should be free to be on anything. Everyone should come to the table being open to change.

The respondent’s long term goals were (1) to have a school that was student centered, a school that met the needs of pre-adolescents. "It should be a place where kids love to come. It should include a strong academic environment with a lot of feeling and empathy and support." (2) The entire staff should work hard on climate. The principal indicated that this has been difficult because half of the staff came from a high school setting and is not oriented to a middle school philosophy.

Had he been successful with his long term goals? The respondent stated that he "didn’t know yet. The job is not done." He noted that he was doing a lot more reflecting on this subject recently. The principal will retire in June of 1990. In closing he commented,

I got my group inside the door. They were brought to the threshold. Someone else will have to move them from there.

The principal described the power structure in the district as very traditional. The structure included a superintendent, assistant superintendent, business manager and director of special education. In regard to how power issues were played out in the district, the respondent
indicated,

The superintendent likes to work with individuals. He is a master with the board of education. He is masterful in presenting district goals to the board.

The superintendent says he is not good with groups but actually he is very good. He has a way of getting people to see his side and move in his direction.

Sometimes, I walk away feeling I've been manipulated in almost an unconscious way. If he wants you to believe something he will he will ask you for that input until he gets it.

Perhaps its machivellian. He wouldn't admit that though. He would tell you he is processing until they (the other party) and he have a reasonable understanding.

The superintendent utilized power positively.

However, this principal stated there are some concerns in the process of communication. For example, the superintendent met regularly with an arm of the local I.E.A. The superintendent worked behind the scenes with teachers and the board. This helped with negotiations but the principal indicated that it created questions and concerns.

It is my assumption that the group was set up because he felt teachers did not have enough redress with principals. I never understood this. The superintendent never confronted any principal with the fact they were not holding legitimate communication with teachers. He just feels strongly that teachers need a direct line with him. Perhaps he needs this more than anyone else.

The principal felt the superintendent's style left
teachers with the perception that "he is the boss and that he is hard to change." As a result, teachers go to the principal and ask him to be an intermediary with the superintendent. The principal indicated that the superintendent meanwhile "has an impression of himself as open and easy to talk to." The principal remarked that "there is a bit of incongruity there."

When asked about recommended changes, the principal said,

If I were to make changes relative to this area, I would not have the superintendent meeting privately with teachers. Any gains are not worth the mistrust. I would also encourage the superintendent to be more visible.

Principal # 7

This respondent stated that empowerment reflected the responsibility and authority which are necessary to handle a position. The respondent indicated that empowerment was important to middle school principals. In response to the question as to what role the superintendent in the district should play in terms of principal empowerment, the principal indicated that it was really the board in the district who could empower or not empower the principal.

The board holds all the power here. The superintendent is just a figure head. He is not empowered so we're hard pressed to talk about his role regarding empowerment.
He stated the board probably feels "they are empowering principals in the district with the new priority based management program." (Later in the interview the respondent stated the reasons why principals are really not empowered with this program and the reasons he was dissatisfied with the program.)

This principal felt he was under a lot of pressure and stress and it exhibited itself throughout the interview. (The interview was broken up over three consecutive days due to repeated interruptions and delays.) A high level of stress was evident in the principal's identification of his long term goals. The respondent indicated that he didn't have time to plan long term.

We are putting out fires all day. There is no dean. We need another assistant principal. There is no time to think creatively. A good day is when seven kids aren't kicked out of a classroom.

The principal continued the discussion on goals, indicating that if he did have more time he would work on an assertive discipline plan and curriculum improvement.

As necessary prerequisites to empowering principals, the respondent stated that superintendent should be able to understand and appreciate the middle school principal's unique problems. There should be assistance from the superintendent with the community and board.

The use of power in the district was most evident
at the level of the board. The respondent indicated that
the board really holds the power in the district and was
very controlling of that power.

Everyone else is just trying to survive. The feeling given to principals is that
problems should never get to the superintendent or the board. If principals
are any good, difficulties will be handled prior to getting to the attention of the
superintendent. Communication about problems is seen as a weakness, not doing one's job.

The district recently adopted what was called the priority based management program. There was no prior
discussion of the program with principals. A board member apparently was using it in his business and one day it was
presented to the principals as the new system. The priority based management system was guided by the
teacher's contract. Problems in the district were to be resolved by three documents, the teacher's contract, board policy and state code. Principals were to keep things "under tabs" in their buildings.

In terms of changes, this principal would have the board and superintendent alter the manner in which the priority based management was "thrown on the principals." He didn't feel it was an effective program. He also felt the tightly controlled structure in place in the district was not conducive to enabling success at the building level.
Empowerment to this principal meant influence, shared decision-making and autonomy as professionals. The respondent felt empowerment was key to the relationship between middle school principals and their superintendent.

If you want to empower in your building, you have to talk about empowerment across the board at all levels.

There needs to be proof that this type of philosophy is evident throughout the organization or teachers won't buy into it at their level. Everyone in the organization needs to be aware of empowerment. Trust levels need to be high. There needs to be a clear sense of mission and vision. My experience with empowering in this district is that trust is at its foundation. Trust must be built.

The principal's primary goal and reason he was hired was to transform the junior high to a middle school. This included change targeted toward currently held attitudes, philosophy, physical plant and a move to a team approach. Students, parents, teachers and administrators were all to be included in the process.

This type of transformation obviously involved extensive staff development. According to the principal, the staff development should address areas such as, "What is an adolescent?" This was particularly important since the staff at this school was trained for a secondary setting. The principal indicated that, "Many couldn't get high school positions so they came here. They haven't been
trained in the moral and emotional development of kids this age."

The respondent felt the relationship between the middle school principal and superintendent should be a two-way process. On this subject, she had the following to say,

If you over communicate that is okay. You need to let the supt. know what is happening. Things should not be a surprise. You need this to build his trust too.

This principal felt she will be successful with her long terms goals though she certainly has seen ups and downs in the last year. She offered this insight on the process of change.

The process of change takes time. Everyone is not with you at once. On top of that there are the inevitable ups and downs. Then there are always the individuals who do not handle change well.

Yesterday’s meeting was a very successful one. So you are catching me at a period where I am feeling hopeful. We hit a milestone yesterday in terms of cooperation. You have to recognize that the road is not straight and there will be ups and downs.

On the subject of achieving success with long term goals, the principal indicated:

You must always be in the driver’s seat. It is easy to emphasize the daily stuff, the routine. You have to get past that however if you are to work on the goals of the organization. Otherwise it is easy to lose sight of where you are headed.

In closing, she said,

We are on the cutting edge. We are trying to
to develop and promote empowerment which in many ways, as far as schools go, is a futuristic concept. Empowerment impacts everyone and perhaps the leadership of the district most directly.

We have some things to keep people here while we are working toward this. We have an unbelievable salary schedule. We also have hired a consultant to help us with the process.

The power structure in this district was not a tightly controlling bureaucracy. Over the last two years, the district has tried to implement site based management. Though there are the typical line/staff positions in the heirarchical structure, these positions played a supportive role to site based personnel.

Site based management was most evident in the building councils. Seating on each council was a group of teachers and the principal. There was a consensus decision making process for all significant decisions. The objectives of the council changed with the goals of individual buildings. The stimulus and guiding philosophy for these councils was the recently created district constitution. This constitution was developed two years ago, by a mix of people; the teachers' union, superintendent, parents, principal representatives and the community.

This principal had some very specific recommendations for other districts struggling with creating empowering roles for their personnel. These
recommendations included:

1. Extensive training is needed before putting site based management into motion. "We are doing the training as we are in it and that causes some problems." Empowerment requires extensive training and a need to sensitize staff to the requirements of its process.

2. When trying to empower, you must respect the process. A comes before B and it's a long way to Y and Z.

3. Someone to facilitate the change process is needed to keep the group on track.

The principal cited an example which highlighted the need for the second and third recommendations.

There was a small group of teachers who did not want empowerment and a site based management system. They wanted the old tight heirarchial structure with everything it entailed. They didn't want to deal with the new expectations in terms of curriculum, use of power, the new decision-making process.

There has been chaos at certain building council meetings due to the resistance of this group. The superintendent is a process person. He knows how to handle a group. He dealt with this particular group of teachers by letting them express themselves, continuing to educate everyone on what the process of empowerment entailed and working to get the more positive element within the faculty to be the majority influence.

You need this type of superintendent or someone who can serve as a consultant in the role of group facilitator.

Principal # 9

This respondent defined empowerment as the power to choose your own destiny. In relation to the middle school
principal, it meant the superintendent should "allow you to be the principal. The superintendent should permit innovation and be supportive of principal's own autonomy. He should work enable the principal to reach his goals."

Her long range goals were to (1) Create the transition from a junior high building to a middle school. (2) Develop an advisor system.

The respondent indicated the superintendent should be supportive of the middle school principal's goals by providing necessary funds. He should also be supportive of the philosophy and concepts underlining your goals. He should help present and sell things to the board and provide emotional support while doing so. The principal felt 98% sure that she will be successful with her long term goals.

The power structure in the district appeared to be a traditional heirarchial one with an interesting twist. The curriculum director wielded a lot of power and played a role independent of the superintendent. The principal commented, "What the curriculum director decides, goes. This individual does not need superintendent approval." The superintendent has given the curriculum director a free rein. This respondent felt the curriculum director overstepped her bounds and diminished the principal's role. The respondent felt she has the expertise in the area of curriculum and was unable to use it.
Power in the district was based on who has money. The curriculum director has a very large budget. "Every principal must develop a relationship with her because she has significant control over the purse strings in the district. The superintendent has definitely empowered this person, so it is absolutely essential that we deal with her."

The other area that was tightly controlled in the district was the hiring of new staff. The personnel director screens all candidates prior to them having any contact with principals. He sends the files of a select few to the principal for the principal's review. The personnel director, like the curriculum director was empowered but he in turn was not sharing that power.

Recommended changes relative to this area of empowerment were that no one person should be empowered to the exclusion of others. In this case the curriculum director's status and the personnel director's manner of screening new staff hindered the work of the principals.

Principal # 10

Empowerment was defined by this principal, as giving power in decision making while demanding responsibility to the organization. In terms of the place empowerment has for the relationship between principal and
superintendent, the response was that the superintendent should provide the principal with autonomy under certain guidelines.

The principal's long term goals were to bring discipline by building in some rules and regulations for all students. A second goal was to make students accountable for their work. A third goal was to improve the school's SAT scores by inservicing teachers in language arts and reading; a coordinator was hired for that. The fourth goal was to make everyone a competent reading teacher and a little more of a social worker.

The respondent felt the superintendent should be supportive of the principal and exhibit that support by making funds and inservice available for new programs. "Success should be encouraged."

In terms of measured success and his long term goals, the principal indicated that he felt positive about his successes regarding kids and discipline. His other goals were contingent on changing teachers. In that respect he felt successful with some individuals and not with others.

The power structure in the district was reported to be traditional. In terms of describing the use of power, the respondent indicated,

One of the strengths of the district is that we are colleagues and friends. It is because of this that our egos are not at stake.
If we have an idea we know that we will be listened to. A decision will be made jointly.

We do support one another here. The superintendent lets the assistant superintendent and me take the lead role a lot. I guess it is our personalities. There is no problem with this. No one is threatened.

Recommended changes were noticeably not in the manner in which power was utilized in the district, but rather in regard to the manner in which long term goals were developed. The principal recommended that the district "develop a five year plan and stick to it, so that the district is not so vulnerable to each new piece of research that comes down the pike."

Principal #11

Empowerment to this principal meant giving "grass roots level power to make decisions in one’s daily life." It was part of the principal/superintendent relationship in the same way it plays a role at all levels.

The respondent has two long term goals. The first was to change the school to a middle school structure. This was not only to benefit the kids but the teachers. The second goal was to work on adviser relationships with kids. In terms of addressing the second goal, the principal indicated the school has a "five day unit on decision making." He would like to broaden the manner in
which the social-emotional development of his students was addressed. The principal felt success with her long term goals was contingent on her ability to get her whole staff inserviced on the "real meaning of a middle school." At the time of this interview, 90% of her teachers had been inserviced in this area.

The principal indicated that superintendents should support the principal in attaining his/her long term goals by allowing the necessary staffing, inservice, and making available opportunities to attend conventions, and workshops.

A traditional structure of power existed in the district. There are two significant factors in the use of power. The principals in the district were reluctant to challenge power. The superintendent was reluctant to give it up.

In the district there were coordinators who have been delegated responsibility to support the principals. They get along well with the elementary principals. According to the middle school principal, "they are of that model. They are not familiar with the middle school." The middle school staff resisted their help. Since the coordinator positions were designed to be liaisons between central office and the buildings, the middle schools did not have as much communication with the central office as the elementary schools.
According to the principal, the superintendent was not a risk-taker. His lack of visibility in the building coupled with the emphasis on the coordinators as liaison personnel and the problems there, resulted in a lack of a strong relationship between the superintendent and the middle school. It also resulted in a lack of district initiative and innovation. Risk-taking if present at all, was the product of isolated endeavors in some buildings or with some programs.

Complicating the matter further, the principal indicated that if they (the principals) are to break out of the mold of never challenging the superintendent, it is the middle school principals who will have to do it. "The elementary principals will not challenge the superintendent. "They are too fearful, it is not their style."

The principal felt a need for change in this type of organizational structure and the current means of operation. She did not see an easy way to accomplish this however, given the current personnel.

Principal # 12

The respondent defined empowerment as leadership and responsibility. "It is when all parties have the sense that the the buck stops here." In terms of the place of
empowerment between principal and superintendent, the respondent indicated, "The superintendent is the power. Therefore, you need his support."

The principal’s long term goals were to work on the district writing program and to learn more about being a principal since he was so new (six months) at the job.

The respondent stated that since he was new, his situation and needs might be different from other principals. He felt the superintendent should play a role in assisting the principal in defining the mission in each building. Second, he felt he should help the principal understand the policies, desires and direction of the board.

The principal felt he was chosen for this position for the purpose, "of being a strong black leader." He felt the staff and superintendent were supportive of that purpose. With this goal in mind, he felt he "can focus himself and be successful."

The power structure in the district was traditional. The superintendent was a "teacher" who will "show you what he wants and guide you in that direction." With this guidance, the superintendent "expects that you will deliver what he wants." The principal added,

The superintendent is not a dictator because what he wants is educationally sound. He has a vision and we follow him.
This principal defined empowerment as providing one with the skills, knowledge base and resources to make responsible decisions. Empowerment was particularly key to decisions related to program planning, implementation and evaluation.

The superintendent, according to the respondent, "should permit the middle school principal an active role in selecting teachers, determining staffing and providing the flexibility to make changes in the curriculum based on the needs of students and the strengths and weaknesses of staff."

Her long term goals were to assist every student in working to his potential. Second, to improve the SAT scores to the level of national averages. Third, to have the staff working harmoniously, be more knowledgeable of the needs of adolescents, and be flexible with changing mindsets.

In order to empower the principal in the area of reaching his goals, the superintendent should, "be understanding of the needs of the school and supportive of what needs to to be done. He should be a positive influence with the board."

The respondent indicated that she felt her goals were possible but they would take extensive retraining of
the staff to accomplish them.

The power hierarchy in the district was described as lean, with traditional positions. "There is not a good deal of money in this district. There are not any additional support staff positions like a curriculum director or director of instruction."

The principal did not describe the superintendent as empowering. That was clear throughout the interview. She indicated that the superintendent was very controlling, did not give much opportunity for joint decision making, was not proactive in his leadership, and did not permit the participation of principals in establishing the direction of the district. She indicated that often decisions impacting the principals were made without asking for input.

Principal # 14

This principal defined empowerment as a term used in a variety of contexts. He stated it was "the ability to act upon." His definition included, "allowance for a certain degree of autonomy, responsibility and authority. It is defined and achieved through one's goals and objectives."

In terms of middle school principal/superintendent empowerment the respondent felt the emphasis here should be
on curriculum support, establishing a direction for teaching strategies, and working with community relationships. He felt the superintendent should provide the general goals, the "mandates" and the principals should have the autonomy to develop the operational plan to achieve those goals.

The principal's long terms goal focused on two areas; language arts and math. The principal felt the mean achievement score on state tests should be at the 11th to 12th grade level. He felt more plans for different instructional strategies should be developed. He also wanted to move toward heterogeneous grouping. His students were for the most part tracked.

A second goal was to develop cooperative learning strategies. Many of the teachers in his building have been extensively inserviced in cooperative learning. He wanted his entire staff to be inserviced.

A third goal was to improve the use of technology. The science and computer programs were developed as part of this goal.

The respondent felt he will be successful achieving his long term goals because he "believes in the system he is in. If you disagree with a direction, you can argue the other point of view and agreement will be reached."

The respondent felt the superintendent should be active in enabling the principal to reach his long terms
goals. In this district this was accomplished in several ways. One way was through the administrative council meetings. These meetings occurred minimally twice per month. The agenda was received beforehand. Issues were reviewed and discussed.

Power was shared at the building level and at the district level. It was interesting that the principal cited more than once in the interview that the community demanded this.

The community is affluent, knowledgeable, involved and political. The community is the impetus for many changes in our program. This community demands a high level of involvement. This impacts the nature of involvement in the individual schools.

At the building level, students, teachers and parents were empowered in the areas related to discipline, curriculum and the various learning labs. At the district level there was high visibility between principals and the board.

The superintendent sees the efficiency in a unilateral decision. He also sees the effectiveness in shared decision making. It is this tradeoff that underlines an empowering philosophy.

He makes a tradeoff, favoring empowerment because he feels benefits the system. I agree.

Each principal in the district was responsible for an area of the curriculum. This obviously required principals to be involved in district wide concerns and participate in district committees. Principals reported to
the board quarterly on the area of curriculum for which they are responsible. The superintendent was not the intermediary between the principal and the board.

No changes were recommended regarding this area. The principal felt satisfied with his level of involvement.

Principal # 15

This principal defined empowerment as the opportunity for making decisions where one has responsibility. This included the entire operation of the school. At times empowerment involved "drawing new boundaries of responsibility and at other times it involves removing boundaries. To be effective, everyone must know the goals and objectives, know why this is the chosen direction, and what the process will entail.

The principal stated, "Empowerment holds a special meaning for the principal and superintendent. If empowered, the principal should be able to explore concerns unique to his building that are not necessarily part of a "cloned" district plan." Principal # 15 indicated the superintendent should make the umbrella of district goals broad enough so that the individuality of different buildings and their communities are not lost. This did not discount the fact that approval and accountability were
also necessary.

The principal's long term goal was to decrease the difference between the minority and majority students by improving the performance of the minority students in the district.

According to the respondent, the superintendent's role in empowerment should be one of support. He must also provide the necessary resources. He should be "an advocate and leader in helping us to do things." Inservice should be provided to move in new directions. Funds should be provided for inservice. He should assist in community relations.

In a community like ours different pockets of the community are very different from others. One section may have a white, affluent population, Another section may be a black, poverty area. Still another may be mixed. These each present different needs and different requirements.

The rest of the community needs to understand that there will be spending differences depending on the needs of the school and that particular community.

In terms of the likelihood of reaching long term goals the principal stated he has not been feeling very successful. The gap between minority and majority students was widening. New strategies were needed to address this. Funds must be spent appropriately.

In terms of the use of power in the district, the board was very powerful. The district has seen its share of superintendents. "We've seen all the cycles, all the
trends." The district was involved in the effective schools movement at the time of this interview.

The principal felt his district was moving in the right direction in respect to attempting to create a more empowering atmosphere. He felt its real positive benefit was to create ownership. He indicated that not everyone was ready for that component of the equation. The principal stated that everyone was invited to be part of the inservice. At times mandatory inservice was necessary. He stated, "Inservice needs to more than a one shot deal." He felt they "should cover a broad range of areas like, how we work with kids and learning strategies for underachievers."
Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment

Presentation of the Survey Data

### Table 25 Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment
**Means and Standard Deviations, Current Status**

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### Table 26 Desired State

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### Table 27: Tests of Significance for Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment

**Student - Newman - Keuls Test**

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</table>

**Alpha** = .05  
**DF** = 118  
**MSE** = 10.253

Means with the same letter are not significantly different.

### Table 28: Test of Significance for Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment

**Tukey's Studentized Range Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>23.250000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2 Desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>19.700000</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1 Current</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alpha** = .05  
**DF** = 118  
**MSE** = 10.253

**Studentized Range** = 2.80052  
**LSD** = 1.15768

Means with the same letter are not significantly different.
TABLE 29  TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR BELIEF SYSTEM
AND WORK CULTURE CONDUCIVE TO EMPOWERMENT

BONFERRONI T - TEST

ALPHA = .05  DF = 118  MSE = 10.253
T Value = 1.98027  LSD = 1.15768
Means with the same letter are not significantly different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<tr>
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<td>19.700000</td>
<td>60</td>
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</table>
Table 30: Survey Questions and Frequency Distribution Relative to Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment

**Question**

The superintendent assists in creating a sense of professionalism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
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**Question**

The formal organizational chart is the primary indicator of who has the power to make things happen.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
principals are trusted professionals who are allowed appropriate flexibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>22</td>
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The superintendent’s leadership style emphasizes facilitation/mediation rather than control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
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<td>Value</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Question

I work in an environment where I feel capable of achieving my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
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<td>Value</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
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Question

The superintendent creates a climate conducive to measured risk-taking.

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<tr>
<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
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<tr>
<td>Value</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
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</table>
TABLE 31  TOTAL TEST SUMMARY RANKING/FREQUENCY/PERCENT
BELIEF SYSTEM AND WORK CULTURE CONDUCTIVE
TO EMPOWERMENT -  CURRENT STATUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum. Percent</th>
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TABLE 32  TOTAL TEST SUMMARY RANKING/FREQUENCY/PERCENT
BELIEF SYSTEM AND WORK CULTURE CONducIVE
TO EMPOWERMENT - DESIRED STATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cum. Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Belief System and Work Culture Conducive to Empowerment

Analysis of Data

Research Question 1

How is middle school principal empowerment defined and its process characterized specific to the belief system and work culture conducive to empowerment?

The survey mailed to principals was not designed to develop a definition but rather to comment on key areas mentioned in the literature. Definitions provided by the interview respondents gave the most insight into this area of empowerment. For this reason, the analysis for research question one will focus solely on the data gained from interviews.

The definition given for empowerment by the interview participants included: the necessary power to handle responsibilities, 74%, the autonomy to accomplish the task, 47%, and the authority to see that tasks are accomplished and decisions are implemented, 33%.

Interview respondents indicated that empowerment involves both an exchange and sharing of power that starts at the top of the hierarchy and if successfully implemented should work its way throughout the system. Comments regarding the manner in which power should be shared proved to be interesting. All principals reported that
empowerment involves a sharing of power and/or giving of power to accomplish one's responsibilities. The description of the power underlying empowerment varied between principals. A majority of the principals interviewed did not perceive power in the same light as the research on power which supports empowering strategies. This finding will be described further.

The description of power in the literature from which the construct of empowerment was derived portrays it as an infinite entity. In theory, the more you share power, for a common good or goal, the more power that is generated. Only two principals, (# 5 and 8,) 13% of the interview participants, gave evidence of this perception of power.

Four principals gave no evidence in their interview of holding any definitive perspective of power. 100% of the remaining group of nine principals were able to articulate a perspective of power which supports empowering relationships. They also maintained a view of power as a finite entity.

This group spoke of the value of sharing power. They provided examples where they did just that. But, they also spoke in terms of "when you give, you also lose."

Comments supporting this type of thinking are typified in this statement by one of the principals. "If the superintendent thinks teachers should be empowered and
involved, o.k., but I don’t like him circumventing me in the process." (Principal 6) Another comment on the subject, was, "We need it (power) to be able to give it to teachers. They have to see you have it in order to feel what they are doing is meaningful. I understand, though, that the superintendent is the boss. He can’t give it all away." (Principal # 1)

This leads me to the conclusion that those who hold to an expanding notion of power seem to be more the exception rather than rule. Most interview participants acknowledged the idea that power can be "given away" but most did not confirm the expanding notion of power. This hampers the implementation of empowerment. Principals are very wary of the control issue associated with sharing or giving power. They want to be sure that a recognition remains that they are in charge.

The survey data provided further insight on this point. Question # 4 on the survey reads,

The formal organization chart is the primary indicator of who has power to make things happen.

Based on the literature alone, one would guess that those in an empowering environment would indicate that the formal organizational chart should not be the sole determinant of who has the power to make things happen. Though their current status may emphasize a traditional heirarchial structure, the literature would support the prediction that principals desiring empowerment would want the power "to
make things happen" to be possible and evident throughout the organization not just within the upper echelon of the organization. However this was not evidenced in the data. The current status results on this question confirmed that most principals currently experience a traditional heirarchical distribution of power. The desired state results were interesting. The majority of principals, 81%, felt the formal organization chart should be the primary indicator of who has the power to make things happen routinely/often. Only 19% selected a response that supported a more empowering culture.

The reluctance on the part of principals to respond to power sharing throughout the organization can be connected with a strong tendency to retain control and position status. This philosophy was evident in the interview comments.

In order to be successful in attempts to empower, this area of the belief system or work culture will have to be addressed before all others. Without significant change in thinking about the construct, an apparent reluctance on the part of principals to empower teachers and superintendents to empower principals will remain. This reluctance will be grounded in the basic belief system of these individuals.

A sizable number of principals when approaching the idea of empowerment, their own or others, seemed to view
the process as contingent on a view of power like that expressed by Principal # 5.

There is a lot of it (power) out there but you really don't share it. You give some away. But, the giver still needs to maintain an element of control. If he doesn't he may not always have the power to give. You give enough to get the job done. It can be good. But, there isn't a bottomless pit out there.

In short, there was evidence of a great deal of reluctance, fear, misunderstanding and a lack of commitment to engage in the process of empowerment. These issues and their relationship to the concept of power that an individual holds will have to be addressed prior to the successful implementation of empowering leadership.

Finally, the survey data indicated that principals believe superintendents are still the ultimate power for them. They in turn, expressed a desire to be the ultimate power for their teachers.

This argument is similar to the ideas Rosabeth Kanter proposes on the experience of powerlessness. According to Kanter, the powerless require resources, (designated sponsors, the ability to grant favors, funds to allocate), to remove them from a state of powerlessness. The majority of principals interviewed responded as if they are experiencing powerlessness. This must be addressed prior to moving them to a point where they feel capable and willing to empower.
In conclusion, it appeared that the majority of those attempting to empower still have limitations in their view of how it occurs, its contingencies and requirements, and its potential outcomes. The fallacy in their beliefs, as supported by the research on empowerment was that they hold to a notion of power as involving a giver who was powerful because he had something good to give. For these misguided principals, retaining their ability to empower or retaining their power required that they always have more resources, favors or expertise than the those they wish to control.

What was in their definition, was an understanding of the concept of the expanding nature of power, and the benefit that can be reaped in sharing power. In the more narrow view of power, held by many principals, descriptions of the exchange of power were provided. Many of which did not result in empowerment. Rather, the goal was to maintain positional control, control of individual power over the power of the group. Furthermore, this perspective doesn’t recognize the potential ability of the empowered person to share power in return. In fact, within this narrow definition of empowerment, the idea of continuing to share power up and down the organizational hierarchy may actually be threatening.

This argument has significance for attempts at empowerment. Unless the philosophy which supports
empowering attempts is grounded in the perspective of power as infinite and expanding in its capacity, attempts at empowering will either be narrowly defined, or short-lived and unsuccessful.

In completing the definition of empowerment relevant to this area, interview data outlined the importance of allowing for the possibility of a wider description of who does the empowering of the principal. Interview participants in larger districts, 8,000 students or more, reported that an individual in the central office, an assistant or associate superintendent assumed the role of principal support or a liaison person with the principals.

This person played a key role in empowerment. This individual was described as the link to the superintendent or he the principal support person was empowered by the superintendent to empower principals.

The single most significant factor separating the most highly empowered and empowering principals from the others as indicated in the interview data was the trust factor. Trust within empowering relationships was very high. The importance of building trust in the work culture and its significance to empowerment was discussed and stressed by 87% of the interview respondents.

Trust, in some cases was reported to occur because of the length of time the principal and superintendent had
worked together. In other situations, trust resulted when one person "proved" himself in a very significant, singular incident.

The principals interviewed indicated that empowerment involved an element of risk taking, 73%. Several, 27% made the comment, that they were new in the process of experiencing increased empowerment and did not yet know all the outcomes of increased risk-taking.

Interview participants indicated a mix of feelings in response to the question of whether risk was encouraged in the district. 40% of the interview participants who indicated a problem with encouragement for risk-taking also experienced low trust for their superintendent. Trust was reported to work effectively when it was expressed as a two-way relationship, both principal and superintendent must experience it.

Research Question 2

What do middle school principals report to be their experiences with the current status of empowerment in the areas of a belief system and work culture? Current status should be described in relation to the principal's relationship with the superintendent. Contrast the current status with the desired state.

Both the interview and survey data were used in supporting the analysis to this question. Current and desired state of empowerment relative to this focus area
are presented and contrasted.

The interview data provided a good starting point to begin a response to this question. The data resulted in a mean score of 19.7 for the current status which was computed on the five questions related to this area. The standard deviation was 4.3. This was the lowest current status mean score of all six areas of potential powerlessness explored in the study. This indicated that this focus area was functioning at the lowest level of empowerment of the six groups.

One might hypothesize that the area that had the lowest ranking for current status of empowerment would show the widest disparity between current and desired state within the six focus areas of the study. It was interesting to note, however, that this was not the case. The greatest numerical disparity between current and desired state as evidenced in the survey data, occurred in the area of principal evaluation and professional growth. A further analysis of this will occur in that section.

Looking closely at the current and desired states of this area, several interesting findings surfaced within the survey data. First, in this area, as in all six areas studied, there was a difference between current and desired state. Principals desired increased empowerment in this area. The mean score for the desired state of this area was 23.2. The standard deviation was 1.4.
Second, using three different measures of significance, the Student Newman Keuls, Tukey's Studentized Range and Bonferroni T-Test, survey findings indicated that the difference between current and desired status was significant.

Looking back at the survey's data on current status of empowerment relative to this area, several areas warranted analysis. To begin with, the data from the mailed survey indicated that principals feel superintendents were not doing the things necessary to create a sense of professionalism within their districts. One quarter of principals felt that their superintendent fostered professionalism in their district inconsistently to rarely.

The interview data shed some light on the reasons for differing current status reports and the comparatively low ranking when contrasted to the desired state. In districts where empowerment appeared high in regard to the professionalism, 47%, principals spoke about the importance of their superintendent modeling professionalism for them. Principals in turn, modeled the same sense of professionalism with their teachers.

An additional benefit reported by empowered principals was that they perceived that their teachers also shared in a heightened sense of professionalism. This occurred through increased central office contact with the
building. Empowered principals reported their teachers assumed that when the superintendent treated the work of the principal with the respect due a professional, central office was more likely to accord the same respect to teachers in that principal's building. Principals attempting to establish a professional atmosphere in their building, who were unable to also convey the superintendent's support for the same level of professionalism somehow lost integrity with their teachers.

This resulted in principals and teachers alike being very sensitive to whether their efforts were truly recognized and whether building efforts really matter. 27% of the survey respondents indicated rather strong concerns relative to this issue. In terms of what principals desire, 85% of the survey participants felt that superintendents should foster professionalism routinely. The remaining 15% indicated it should occur often.

In a another area relevant to the belief system and work culture conducive to empowerment, survey respondents were asked if the superintendent allowed them the appropriate flexibility. Approximately one quarter, 23%, indicated that the superintendent only occasionally to seldom allowed flexibility for principals. 83% desired this routinely compared to only 42% who currently experienced this.
The interview participants provided further insight here. They defined flexibility as the ability to accomplish a task which met their individual building needs, in the manner they deemed to be appropriate. 87% of the interview participants talked about the importance of the superintendent recognizing either the unique needs of the middle school or the unique needs of the community they serve.

Another survey question regarding this area asked the respondent whether the superintendent’s leadership style emphasized facilitation/mediation rather than control. 42% felt that facilitating rather than controlling style occurred sometimes. At least 15% of the 42% felt facilitation occurred never or very inconsistently. 42% desired facilitation rather than control from the superintendent frequently. 52% gave it a higher rating and indicated it should happen routinely.

The interview data, again, were most helpful in giving more of a in depth description of what facilitation versus control meant to the principal. A number of principals stated this was most relevant in enabling principals to reach their goals. Examples of superintendent facilitation given by principals included: resources, support, inservice, and funds.

Again, 25% of the interview respondents seemed to experience some form of significant powerlessness. They
indicated that only sometimes to never have they felt capable of achieving their goals. The group was evenly split between those who felt they could achieve their goals routinely and those who felt they experienced goal achievement often.

Interview data indicated that the superintendent created a climate conducive to measured risk-taking on a routine basis only 26.7% of the time. 41% of the time he did this only sometimes to rarely. A climate conducive to risk taking significantly separated the empowered from the non-empowered.

Research Question 3

What conditions enable and/or inhibit the empowerment process in the area of belief system and work culture as experienced by middle school principals?

Both survey and interview data were in agreement that one’s perspective of power and its relationship to empowerment was the foundation which eventually resulted in inhibiting or enabling empowerment. I already discussed the various views of power evidenced in the principal interviews. Their significance was also outlined.

Both sets of data suggested that prior to embarking on a significant district change effort designed to create empowering programs an assessment of the view people hold
regarding power and the meaning of empowerment should be completed. After assessment, an educational plan addressing needs should be formulated.

A second condition evidenced in both sets of data, key to enabling empowerment was the process of communication that operated in the district. A characteristic which seemed to be particularly important in a district desiring to empower was the concept of a two-way communication system, which involved both horizontal and vertical lines of communication.

Sharing key information was also found to be key. The survey and interviews agreed that in districts with a more empowering culture, information was shared easily. This implied that all pertinent information was given and that was provided in a timely fashion.

Continuing on the communication theme, the interview data clearly indicated that in more empowering districts, personnel who are responsible for an area did the communicating to other significant parties: the board, newspapers, the community. Their views and experiences were not presented for them.

For example, principals in more empowering districts did their own board presentations. They were encouraged to communicate freely and directly with the board. Principals in this type of environment chaired administrative meetings when the discussion was relevant to
an area for which they had primary responsibility. Principals in empowering districts were encouraged and able to meet freely to share in constructive and productive conversations regarding concerns and issues of mutual interest.

Barriers to empowerment in the area of communication, noted in the interview data, included a lack of appropriate information, or information that was purposely withheld. Superintendents who refused or significantly attempted to limit board contact with their principals set up barriers to principal empowerment.

The empowerment process was only as strong as the linkage system on which it depends. 19.98% of the principals interviewed cited a person in the central office who was empowered but did not share that power with others, hampering all in the process. Examples frequently given included key personnel i.e. an assistant superintendent, curriculum directors, who did not share the power awarded them by the superintendent.

In terms of enabling the empowerment process relative to the area of work culture and belief system some unique skills on the part of the superintendent appeared necessary. Interview respondents discussed the importance of having skills of group facilitation, the ability to process information while showing sensitivity to individual differences, and the ability to handle conflict.
Principals interviewed experiencing significant empowerment noted these skills present in their superintendent 40% of the time. In two cases 13% of the population, a consultant was hired to support the process.

Middle school principals in elementary districts, felt the needs of the middle level are markedly different from the elementary level. 100% of the interview respondents remarked on this distinction sometime during the interview. The significance of this in terms of empowerment, was that middle school principals, felt that sensitivity on the part of the superintendent to the unique needs of their level was integral to the process of empowerment.

When questioned as to what they were looking for in terms of superintendent sensitivity, their comments included the following:

He (the supt.) used to teach the middle level. He doesn't go off the wall when there are discipline issues. He understands the need for dealing with pre-adolescent issues; drugs, alcohol. He knows that we need more of a team approach.

Commenting further on the process, 40% of principals interviewed cited the importance of being attentive to the process of enabling empowerment. If not handled correctly, it definitely became a barrier. Issues key to successfully working through the process of empowerment included giving it the appropriate time,
allowing for ups and downs, permitting failure without placing paralyzing blame, giving events significance by being sensitive to the elements of the process, providing the necessary inservice.

Another important point relative to process were outcomes contingent on who initiated empowerment. Within the interview data, some principals indicated that empowerment was initiated by the superintendent, others called it a two-way process, still others described it as something coming from the principal with the superintendent responding. The two-way process yielded the best results.
Principal # 1

In this district, principals were asked for input often. There were two groups that have regular access to the superintendent. These groups were called his cabinets. The larger cabinet consisted of the assistants, coordinators, superintendent, and principals. The smaller cabinet included the superintendent and his assistants. The district was divided into four regions. Activities for principals were coordinated around a particular region. Principals were asked for input regarding the concerns of their region. Staff development was focused on an effort to support principals' attempts in addressing the concerns of their region.

Principals, the superintendent and assistant superintendent met once per month in this district. Principals were able to place items on the agenda for this meeting. Middle school principals met alone, prior to holding meetings with the superintendent. Areas of mutual concern to the principals were discussed and addressed at these meetings.

The principal commented,

We can get our concerns to the superintendent through some formalized lines of communication. Once per month we sit down with the assistant
superintendent and discuss an agenda. He communicates this information to the superintendent.

Once per month a liaison group of four principals meets with the superintendent. We give him direct input this way. Another way to give input to decisions is through committees. Each region has a person on a committee. We all are apprised of the work of the committees. We all generate ideas for committees. Those ideas our communicated by our representative.

Principals "hear about conflict when it occurs."

The assistant superintendent handled all the parent complaints, etc. He communicated to principals the nature of concern brought to him. The principal felt that discussions with the assistant superintendent regarding building conflict were fairly conducted. He stated,

Conflict is always there and we deal with it. We hear about all complaints. The assistant superintendent or superintendent will call us about them and get our side. We solve the problems together. I feel supported.

There was encouragement in the district to take risks. Educated risk-taking, which involved having a plan and making modifications to the plan when necessary, was the key to successful outcomes. The respondent cautioned,

You have to be the judge. If you find what you are attempting is not working out, you must make a course correction.

At the building level, decision making was controlled by the principal and teachers. Individual programs and their implementation were handled at the building. Yet, regular communication with the superintendent, by the principal was also noted to be
important.

You have to communicate, communicate, communicate with the central office. Surprises are not wanted.

This respondent indicated he receives all the information he needs to make a decision. The superintendent was described as timely about getting information to him. Principal #1 recommended one change. He would like to see a move in the direction of a site-based management system. He commented,

I want more control over funds so I can work with what I have in such a way that it has the best outcomes for our building. For example, I could do some creative things with staff development in our building if I am not hampered by a strict district outline.

Principal #2

The principal indicated that the superintendent approaches each principal individually when obtaining input. The principal described the process as follows:

He isolates things. They are taken care of with the individual or building where there is a problem. The nature of discussion really does not get out.

Since input was provided in isolation, the respondent did not know how much input was given by other principals and how the superintendent responded to their ideas. The principal identified one isolated situation where in the midst of crisis there was mutual
collaboration. However, in the day to day workings of the district, collaboration was not reported.

According to the principal, "Conflict is not apparent on the surface in the district." The respondent felt this was due to the fact the superintendent desired to have problems resolved and things running smoothly. The superintendent was reported to want to know what was happening around the district. "He does not want to be surprised." On the occasions where conflict was apparent, the superintendent did not want it to get out to the larger public.

As much as possible, we solve our own problems in our own building. Because of the superintendent’s feelings on conflict, seldom is there open conflict.

I know how he and I interact over problems. I do not see him interact with others over problems. So, I don’t know how he resolves it with them.

When asked about the risk taking climate in the district, the principal gave the following response,

The superintendent has been here awhile. He has a heart problem. I’m sure he wants to retire here. He is not against innovation. In fact we are trying several new things. But, I would not say he wants to go out on a limb with the board. He has a pretty good relationship with the board and he wants to keep it that way.

He indicated that principals can take risks, "but if a problem comes up, the principal may be facing the board or community alone. In the midst of conflict, the principal described the superintendent’s response this
In response to conflict, the superintendent listens to the concerns of the party who has a point of disagreement. More than likely he will say nothing while the parent, for example, and the principal are in front of him. He will not support you openly in conflict. You do not know what he says behind closed doors to members of the community or board. What you read into his silence, well...?

Therefore, you have two choices in handling conflict in this district. You can handle it yourself or you isolate the problem.

The principal closed with the following comment,

I like him (the superintendent) better than the others I've worked with. I don’t forget that the guy has a heart condition. He isn’t really ready for tackling a lot. He is a survivor...."

With the last superintendent, there was no risk under any circumstances. Now, we can take risk, but we have to deal with the consequences directly. Responsibility for problems is not necessarily shared.

In discussing building level follow-up to decisions made at the central office level, the respondent indicated that "we explore things if the superintendent is interested in them." He described some new joint decision making ventures that are being attempted for the first time in the district. The principal indicated that there was an element of risk taking within these.

In terms of where joint decision making was evidenced, multiple committees were recently formed to study different areas in order to formulate the district's strategic plan.
You can’t have multiple committees like we do and not take risks. We involve the board, teachers, community, everybody... Through more ownership you have to relinquish power.

These attempts were just newly initiated. Their outcomes were yet unclear.

Information key to decision making was disseminated through meetings or by phone. Again, many of the meetings were one to one encounters with the superintendent.

In terms of his satisfaction with this area, the respondent indicated,

I have the power to do what I need to do here. I have the necessary power to control things. It is hard to venture out, however. I do so because that is my personality. The other principals are not as inclined to do so.

The superintendent will protect himself. I think that is o.k. I know when I take a position on an issue he (the superintendent) might not be there. I might be out there alone. If an issue is really critical, I think it is important for him to be there. I’m not sure if he will be...

In terms of how the principal responded to this type of work environment, he commented,

Principals have to be flexible. I’ve got to be able to rebound. Things are working out now... I don’t know about the future...

Principal # 3

This principal stated that principal input on
decisions was sought at the regular staff meetings scheduled twice per month. There was always an agenda for these meetings. Any principal can add an item to the agenda. She felt sharing with other buildings at these meetings was conducted in a productive manner.

It is a good way to learn what impacts other buildings and why. Problems can be resolved in this way.

In terms of conflict, the principal described the response of the administrative team as "we just argue it out." Conflict was encouraged in the district. The superintendent permitted flexibility. He just "lets us go." She gave the following example,

Two principals did not take the state learning objectives seriously. They didn't feel we would ever have to do anything with them. We debated about them at staff meetings.

At these meetings, the superintendent played the role of a referee. The first year there was little support from some schools for learner objectives. The principals in two buildings just let their schools go by the wayside. When it came time for the first state testing not every building's test results were within the state's averages. The principals who did not pay attention to the state learning objectives changed their ways the following year.

The superintendent lets the process change the principals. He permits things to evolve naturally.

Principal # 3 felt her superintendent conducted business this way because of the relationship he has developed with the principals. She commented, that "The administrative group has been around together some twenty
years. If there is no natural, productive, response that evolves from letting the process work itself through, the superintendent will intervene and settle the conflict."

Risk taking was promoted in a variety of district activities. The respondent indicated that she was the type of person who initiated risk. If one desired to take risks, it would be encouraged by the superintendent. On the other hand, if you did not take risks, that would be permitted also.

In terms of follow-up on decisions made with central office, a team approach was utilized. Again, the respondent indicated this was her experience because this was what she demanded from the superintendent.

We do it this way because it is the way I want it. I want to know that he is behind me. I always check for him.

Obtaining information to make sound decisions was not a problem in the district. The respondent indicated that she gets "all the information we need." "Sometimes, we get more than necessary." She went on to say that she received copies of everything from the state. The superintendent ensured that principals have the necessary information prior to discussing or making decisions of any significance.

The principal was generally satisfied with the degree of empowerment she experiences in the area of decision making and problem solving. She closed with these
Opinions are listened to and respected. We are given direction by the superintendent, once that is given we have the freedom to work things out from there. There is room to innovate and do things your own way.

In terms of recommended changes, the principal felt the district needed a full-time curriculum person to conduct research and analyze programs in order to assist the decision making process.

We can’t afford administrative help here to the degree we need it. Principals here have too much to do, much more than one person should handle. This causes some problems.

It is hard to really review the total curriculum program, integrate articulation between buildings, and create consistency for the district, while you are simultaneously handling building needs.

Principal # 4

The principal indicated that principal input on central office matters was limited. He gave a few examples of when input was requested. These included decisions on teacher tenure, complaints about an individual teacher, and staff utilization discussions each spring. Other than these occasions, the principal indicated there was not a great deal of principal involvement in significant district issues.

Conflict was not discussed in Principal # 4’s district. The principal emphasized that risk taking was
definitely not encouraged in the district.

The superintendent delegated responsibility for certain projects to the principals. Follow-up for the most part was mechanical. The principal made the following comments on the process.

Since you have little input into decision making, the plans that require follow-up are largely mechanical. For example, there might be a change in the number of kids permitted in one of the special education classes. The superintendent will give you the information on that and expect you to follow up.

Key information was reported to be withhold by the superintendent. Principals obtained little information directly from him. The long term reaction to this as described by the respondent was frustration, disappointment, and in the principal's words, "people stop trying." The current environment of administrative decision making left the principal with the following thoughts.

Work becomes a routine every year. We've even stopped identifying what we need to do since we have always been told we cannot afford it.

The principal was "very disappointed" with the level of empowerment he experienced in the area of decision making and problem solving. He felt more group discussion was needed, more involvement of building personnel, more agreement about goals.
Principal # 5

This respondent reported that input on decisions was sought on a regular basis at the administrative meetings. Meetings usually began with the superintendent reviewing information he heard regarding different areas. He elicited the input of the principals on these issues. A voice mail system was used widely in the district. The system allows people to stay current.

In terms of conflict, the principal indicated that there wasn’t a lot of it because authority was given to the personnel dealing with the issue. Additionally, the superintendent was the type of person who looked at all angles in an attempt to prevent conflict.

The principal described the superintendent’s style.

The superintendent doesn’t stew on things for a week. He’ll tell you to take care of your part of the matter and he’ll take care of his and he does.

If there was a situation where a principal could not make his own decisions, he would be considered a weak link. It would not be long before the person would be gone. The superintendent would make the decision for them.

If a principal is having a problem with a member of the central office and cannot satisfactorily resolve the problem, he is free to go directly to the superintendent.

In this district, principals were encouraged to take risks. In order to be successful, the risks were to be calculated risks, not blind ones. The superintendent
was described as success oriented. Community perception was extremely important to him. Therefore, "innovation is fine, but it should be measured, and supported."

Though empowered to a significant degree, this principal indicated that "failure is not really shared in the district." Most people were described as reluctant to talk about their own failure. If the superintendent heard of a problem or failure of a program he called the principal in charge of that area. The purpose of the discussion, according to this respondent was to determine who was "at fault."

A further note on risk taking, the superintendent was described as being very clear with principals about his desires. The superintendent consistently wanted to see the district remain in a positive public spotlight.

He says to us, "looking down the road, I want this district to be the best existing anywhere on the map." This means an emphasis on staff development, use of technology and innovation.

The respondent felt the superintendent will move beyond this district when he completes what he wants to do. "He is an extremely good sales person, knowledgeable. As big as the district is, he tries to be personal."

Follow-up to district level decision making was handled by the following process.

Each meeting begins with a Recognition/Care/Concern session where information about those three areas are disseminated throughout the
The superintendent is an idea person. He generates ideas on a variety of areas. This sets the tone for principals to follow-up on his and their own ideas. This means a lot of work and long hours.

If there was any area for recommended change, the respondent indicated that it would be to know at what point the superintendent was comfortable with the principal coming to him to discuss a problem and when that was perceived by the superintendent as indicative of the principal not doing his job. This ambiguity bothered the principal. He had this to say on the subject.

What I am trying to describe is a real grey area. There are areas that you want to share with the superintendent. You would like to get his thoughts and feelings on the issue. He encourages you to let him know what is up, to bounce ideas around. Yet, by the same token there is always this underlying feeling that too much discussion or the wrong thing said about certain issues might result in him (the superintendent) feeling that you are not doing your job or simply being less than the exemplary person he keeps saying he hires. You are never sure what the repercussions will be long term.

The superintendent is a power oriented person. There is pressure to be successful. You sometimes have the feeling that the people below are in a tenuous position. There is a tendency not to show weakness.

The level of empowerment the principal experienced in this district came with a need to be responsible and accountable. The principal indicated that work must be done well and right. "If you haven’t done what you need to do, the superintendent will see that." The up side of all this, according to the principal, was that the
superintendent was good at foreseeing problems and can be of assistance in preventing mistakes. The down side was described as, "if you do however, screw up, even temporarily, the superintendent will catch it." The principal restated a point made earlier regarding the superintendent's dislike of conflict or problems.

If you don't react quickly enough the superintendent will react for you. A recent example was when one of the principals had a problem with a militant staff member. The principal did not respond quickly enough so the superintendent took care of the matter.

The superintendent empowers, he shares power, but the principal had the feeling that he was not the ultimate mover even in his own building. In the event of dissension, the superintendent gathered input from everyone. If the group couldn't come to a consensus, the superintendent decided the issue. The superintendent was described as a master at facilitating activities. He put people in key positions based on their perceived ability to get a job done. Yet, the respondent believed that it was the superintendent who really wielded the power underlining those positions.

With the granting of empowerment, the superintendent expected to receive loyalty in return. According to the respondent, this meant that principals and the superintendent were expected to share and express a similar vision. They were also expected to work together
to move the district to the position the superintendent desired.

A recommended change was to increase principal discretion with the building site budget.

Principal # 6

The principal in this district felt the superintendent held to the philosophy that "the less involved principals are in decision making, the less chance of people getting information they shouldn't have or don't need." The superintendent was described as "keeping his cards close to the vest." Ultimately, the principal indicated that he has come to terms with this. He commented,

I don't question it. Five to seven years into my tenure, I was looking for superintendent possibilities. I wanted something else. Opportunities didn't happen. I acquiesced and became disillusioned.

Principal input was sought through phone calls and the bi-monthly administrative meetings. The superintendent stopped by the principal's office periodically. The superintendent did not initiate sitting down informally with the principals. The respondent felt more informal communication would be helpful.

The respondent felt he had a lot to offer the
superintendent, a number of skills and strengths that were never tapped or developed. The principal remarked that he has a strong academic background. He attended good schools, with outstanding reputations. He has excellent writing skills. The respondent felt that these skills and attributes could have been utilized and never were.

The principal indicated that conflict in the district was always handled on a one to one basis in the superintendent's office. It was never handled with the group. The superintendent went so far as to "end a meeting if he senses a ground swell of discontent or conflict."

Risk-taking was "only okay, on paper." In reality, the burden of proof when decisions were challenged or when conflict occurred was on the one who proposed the taking of risk in the first place. As a result, not much risk-taking was initiated in the district.

When a decision was made at central office, the plan for implementation was left to the principals. Central office did have a sense of "hands-off" when it came to building issues. Principals received all the information they needed to make a decision.

In terms of satisfaction with this area, the respondent felt that the superintendent should be more open with the administrative group. He made these comments on the subject.

The superintendent should have more direct contact with the principal group. Taking into
account the superintendent’s uncomfortability with group process, I understand the reason he prefers not to deal with large groups. But, he needs to improve on his group dynamics skills.

A second recommendation was in reference to improved communication. The principal indicated that the superintendent had an "open door policy". but communication was "one-way." The superintendent, according to the principal, needs to express more confidence in his management team by communicating with them.

Finally, the principal recommended that the superintendent analyze the unique skills of his principals and delegate work accordingly. He should capitalize on the strengths of his principals.

Principal # 7

This principal indicated that in the area of decision making and problem solving, the superintendent sought frequent input from the administrative team. There were meetings of that group twice per month. The agenda, however, was consistently incomplete and at times difficult to understand. Therefore, it was difficult to prepare for these meetings.

Usually decision making was focused on reaction to a proposed district policy, such as discipline. Minor aspects of the policy were the focus of those discussions. e.g. how to implement a change in a special education
program. Areas chosen for discussion by the superintendent most often targeted the management aspects of an issue, rather than the leadership component.

The superintendent did not want conflict to be openly displayed. He felt principals should resolve matters within their own buildings. In this district, the principal indicated that it was not perceived as positive if conflict got out of the building to the superintendent's attention.

In addressing conflict, the superintendent wanted principals to rely on the priority based management system's guidelines for resolving disputes. This system, according to the principal, was developed to prevent heated issues or conflict from reaching the school board.

The principal felt the priority based management system was developed by the board after the superintendent informed the board that he was dealing with "too much stuff from principals." These matters were described as issues the superintendent felt should have been handled by the building principals.

The priority based management system required principals to follow a three step process in handling conflict; (1) check policy, (2) contrast policy with the situation, (3) review the school code for further guidance.

According to the respondent, the "superintendent
was too sensitive and insecure, and therefore, did not handle conflict well, nor could he resolve it satisfactorily." When confronted with conflict, the superintendent "pulls rank, gets angry and people withdraw." The principal furthered his description of the superintendent as "living in a bubble."

The risk-taking climate in the district was described as "poor" by this respondent. There was a policy of "if you screw up, it is your fault." The primary aim of discussions with the superintendent which address conflict was to establish "fault, forgetting or ignoring how to correct the problem."

A group of central office administrators followed up on decisions initiated at the central office level. Each of these individuals was responsible for a particular area. Most were described as "at least open to hearing what principals have to say on an issue." The exception cited by the respondent was the finance manager. According to the principal, the finance manager made unilateral decisions. The principal made the following comments regarding the finance manager.

Nothing is documented, there is no processing, Communication is unilateral. There is no real follow-up plan.

The superintendent actively followed up on central office business with the sole purpose of ensuring that the priority based management system was utilized. Since this
was the primary means of involving himself with principals, and since the priority based management system was designed to keep principals from bringing matters to the attention of the superintendent, the process resulted in further isolating the superintendent from the principals. An outcome of this was summed up in the following comment, "Most of what happens around here is short-lived."

Key informations to making decisions was provided through memos, seldom through group or individual discussion.

The finance manager sends you "pink sheets. The superintendent uses "blue sheets."

Information was not disseminated before meetings. This resulted in problems. The principal described the concerns.

The Priority Based Management System, for example, was just a directive received at an administrative meeting. At the meeting we received the manual on the system. There was no discussion, no prior information, no involvement on the part of principals in the development of the system. Just a "here it is," we are using this system from now on.

Recommendations for change relevant to this area included looking at the effectiveness of the priority based management system, getting more information before decisions have to be made, and obtaining closure from the superintendent. The current lack of closure to key issues really bothered the principal. He made this comment.
Many areas are just left hanging. Discussion at meetings has become a situation where everybody throws around a few comments and then we move on to something else. There is no direction from the superintendent, no major insights that guide us.

If direction comes, it is in the form of a directive which may or may not have included the points/issues brought up in discussion. You never really know how decisions are made.

Principal # 8

Principal input on decisions was sought in all areas effecting the district. This ran the gamut from bus service to curriculum. Administrative meetings were held weekly. There was an agenda, minutes were taken. A consensus decision making model was utilized in the district.

Conflict was handled through the consensus decision making model. When someone on the administrative meeting dissented they were required to rate their dissent on a scale of (zero to five). A principal had the option of indicating a "block," if it was a problem he felt very strongly about and wished to have further debate. Individuals indicating a block were asked the question, "What would it take to resolve your block?" At that point the person blocking stated his position and discussed alternative resolutions.

There was a climate conducive to risk-taking in the
district. Risk-taking was evident in the district and was visibly and symbolically encouraged. Risk-taking was characterized by research and thought. Risk was never mindless.

In terms of follow-up to jointly discussed plans, the superintendent was proactive with certain principals. The superintendent became proactive in one of two instances. Either one of the principals requested his involvement or he became involved based on his own interest in a specific area.

Information key to making decisions was reported to be provided. It was timely and complete.

The principal felt it was too early to relate whether she was satisfied with this area. She explained why.

The district is undergoing massive changes. People are not all ready to hear or accept all the plans. Not everyone understands the changes or how complex the change process really is.

Since the district was in a significant state of flux, the principal indicated that at this point she could not make sound recommendations as to how to improve the process of empowerment in decision making.

Principal # 9

This principal related that principal input was
sought at the administrative council, which met the same day as the school board. All central office issues were discussed at this meeting. Principals were usually brought in as a last step in the decision making process. They were not involved in the initial formulation of the issues or concerns. Nor, were they part of a process which looked at a variety of alternatives. Principals entered the process at the point the alternatives had been reduced to just one and then provided input on minor modifications.

The superintendent in this district did not operate with agendas. Therefore decision making was "applying the frosting on the cake that has already been baked." You were unaware of the process that took place beforehand.

Since principals did not know what might come up at the administrative meeting, they did not prepare for the meeting. This meant no prior discussions with other principals, no independent research on an issue.

In terms of handling conflict, the superintendent let people "talk a lot, but there is no real closure." This principal experienced a lot of frustration, particularly on more significant issues, when it came to the decision making process. She indicated that she appreciated closure on issues and did not always get it. She commented,

If there was an agenda, with topics listed, that we received beforehand, then some of the critical issues could be discussed ahead of time. This would make for sounder decisions,
and an increased possibility of gaining closure.

There was encouragement for risk-taking evident in the principal's comments. "Nothing is considered stupid here." There was a "recognition that people and principals are different."

Decisions made jointly involving the both central office and the principal were characterized by a follow-up process handled by the building principal. The respondent commented, "At that point, you need to just go with it."

The principal made several points describing her district.

The district is growing. My building just opened this year. Therefore, there is not always a lot of precedent guiding the way things should be. Everything is new and people are not sure what should happen.

Early in the interview, the respondent indicated that it was important to know some things about the superintendent in order to understand why things worked the way they did. She described him as follows:

The superintendent is well liked around here. He has an open door policy and people feel he is easy to talk to. This style partially explains his reliance on personal interactions to communicate information. He seldom sends memos. As I already indicated we do not receive a agenda before our meetings. If you want information, you can ask for it. He does not initiate a lot of written information. However, he will give you what you ask for however. I guess he believes that if you really want it you will ask for it.

This principal recommended a change in the manner in which principals relate to one another. He wanted to
see the principal group meet and discuss issues alone more regularly. The superintendent has discouraged this. The principal felt that if the entire administrative council met, the meetings would generate more frank discussions.

Principal # 10

In this district, principal input was sought at the bi-monthly administrative meetings. An agenda was set for these meetings. Input of the principals was heard. The superintendent in this district ultimately made the final decision on most issues, but it was based on collective input. The process did have some constraints, money, for example was one identified.

Conflict was handled through discussion. If emotions were very high on an issue it might be tabled temporarily. Disagreement was okay. However, once a decision was made the principal commented, "we close rank and that is it."

Risk-taking was encouraged in the district. Principals were described as taking a lot of risk. It was risk that was based on research and planning. It assumed accountability for one's actions. The respondent indicated the superintendent also took risks. He gave an example.

With the recent referendum, instead of a tax increase the superintendent chose to go the route of bonds for the new building. In this way the building would be paid off resulting
in more money to the district."

The superintendent may have advised principals not to take a certain risk if he felt it would not work. But, if the principal desired to proceed, "the superintendent will be supportive." The principal gave the following example:

A classic example of this is when some principals move to get rid of a tenure teacher. We have a galvanized union here. The superintendent knows that. It is a major headache to move out tenure teachers. But, if you feel it is in the kids' best interest, he will assist you in making the life of the teacher most uncomfortable until she quits. He takes the heat from the union with you.

In terms of follow-up on decisions from central office, the principal indicated this was completed through "memos, directives and specific guidelines. We have an excellent communication system here." The primary reason follow-up was so effective was that the district was like "a family."

We call people by their first name here. When we discuss something at the central office level it is immediately (same day) communicated to the staff. People know what is going on. We don't have to publish things. We tell them directly.

In terms of disseminating information, the superintendent typically called a meeting to accomplish this. Once it was recognized that the principals were well aware and in agreement of what was to happen, the follow-up was left to principals to handle with their individual buildings. The principals were described as an assertive
crew, "after a plan is outlined, they take charge and just do it". Meetings were described as generally productive. There wasn’t "a lot of rolling over the same thing."

The respondent described the district administrative staff as a "well oiled machine." "When we have to get something done we do it." He provided this example.

It was 2:00, the superintendent called saying we needed to get some information out to the voters immediately. Some misinformation was being pumped up by a particular community group. By 3:00 the same day the information was copied. That afternoon, 4,000 pieces of paper were distributed in the community. Any principal can move his own army of workers quickly when he needs one.

The principal indicated high satisfaction with this area.

Principal # 11

This respondent indicated that principal involvement in decision making, with district level concerns, occurred for the most part, from the onset of discussion. This was due to her initiation and desire for that level of involvement. Other building principals were not as aggressive and therefore, were less involved in district matters.

The superintendent did not initiate principal involvement in decision-making. Rather, he permitted it to
occur when initiated by the principal.

The administrative council met once per month in this district. Building principals met once per month. The superintendent attended these meetings by invitation only. A good deal of in depth discussion took place at the principal meetings. This same level of involvement and input did not occur at the administrative council meetings. "The elementary principals are afraid to speak up at the administrative meetings, with the superintendent there."

In terms of risk-taking in the district, the level of risk varied from high to low depending on the building. Like involvement in decision making, it was largely contingent on the initiation of the building principal.

When a decision was made jointly, or otherwise, at the central office level, the follow-up to the decision was coordinated by the principal at the building level. This respondent felt this was a flaw in the system. She sensed it occurred due to the amount of time and work it entailed to use a joint decision making process. Decisions impacting the principals were sometimes made unilaterally.

When it came to district matters, follow-up at the building level varied depending on the building principal. The superintendent relied on the building principal to do follow-up. The response in some buildings was better than others. Real change was contingent on "interest level in the building and the politics of the particular building."
The principal gave this example.

A recent example is the new writing program. In some buildings it operates effectively. In others there is no evidence of the program.

Part of the problem with follow-up was that principals were not always given the tools to do follow-up. Staff development was not always provided in the district. The principal remarked that curriculum changes, to be implemented successfully, required that principals know what to look for. Principals were not necessarily made aware of relevant research nor were they given a presentation of key issues impacting a problem.

To elaborate further on the issue of principals receiving key information, they were reported to "receive all they need and are left to figure out the significance of what they get."

The principal recommended one change to the area of decision making. He felt the district's administrative staff should develop skills in the use of a consensus building decision making model, or some type of model supporting effective decision making.

Principal # 12

Principal input on decisions was accomplished at the Leadership Council Meetings held once per month. It also occurred informally. This principal was new to the
district. He started mid-year. Because he was new, this principal, unlike the other principals in the district was meeting with the superintendent once a week.

There was an agenda for each of the administrative council meetings. The principals were able to submit items to the agenda. The principal indicated the agenda was evidence of the power of the central office.

They (central office) know what they want and they expect us to deliver it. What they want is not more than we should be able to handle, it is not beyond our capabilities.

The principal felt it was hard to "say no" to the superintendent. He commented, "It is not like you don't have the opportunity for input. But, they know what they want here and they are determined to get it."

Conflict was handled by permitting everyone to voice their opinion. "You don't meet deaf ears. You get time for input and you do get support." The principal felt he was "treated like a professional in the district but is expected to assume the responsibilities that go with that." Challenging the status quo was okay, but "if you have an opposing point of view you must do your homework first. If you don't the superintendent will walk all over you."

Risk-taking was encouraged provided "you can support the direction you want to go." Again, the superintendent was described as "a strong personality who knows what he wants. He is nobody's fool."
superintendent "does not want to get caught by surprises."
After decisions were made at the administrative level, this
principal took the decision to his staff through the team
leaders. "They get the job done."

There was no problem with getting or sharing key
information necessary to arriving at or supporting a
decision.

The principal was generally satisfied with this
area. He cautioned that he was new on the job, so, he was
"going with the established way."

Principal # 13

Principal # 13 indicated that his input was sought
on issues related to curriculum, staff development,
selection of staff and the overall district program.

Conflict was handled by "talking through it."
There were problems in "coming to a meeting of minds on
certain key issues." The principal brought up an example,

The superintendent and assistant superintendent
feel students in the district should be at grade
level. Principals feels they cannot get these
kids (99% of whom are black and poor) to grade
level without looking at new ways to motivate them.

The principal indicated there are opportunities to
express opinions and to bring in research to support an
opinion. She felt frustrated though, because she was not
sure that gains could be made in short periods of time as
desired by the superintendent. The principal's teachers were reported to require extensive retraining and there were little funds available to accomplish this. The contract did not require teachers to stay late for inservice. The principal felt other assessment instruments beyond the ones the district currently used were necessary.

The risk taking climate in the district was described as very conservative. The district was not very progressive. It did not emphasize current research in its programs. The district was "at a significant financial disadvantage."

Once decisions were made at the central office level in this district, their follow-up was coordinated through the building principal. The superintendent, according to the respondent, did "too little, too late" in ensuring the successful implementation of decisions.

The principal was not satisfied with this area. She would like to see someone at the central office level coordinate curriculum. The superintendent and assistant superintendent were overburdened, more personnel were needed to assist them. Another recommended change was to improve and increase the amount of dialogue that occurred prior to making a decision. Though there were opportunities for input, input was not handled in a fashion the respondent considered constructive or effective. The
Principal saw little connection between input and the final decision.

Principal # 14

Principal input on decisions was sought in almost all areas in this district. Principals and the superintendent addressed policy issues before the board. Sometimes there were more district than building issues facing principals. Even in the area of district finance, an area often reserved for the superintendent and business manager, there was significant principal input. "We, as an administrative council are focusing on our financial position. We’re looking at a possible referendum, and other cost cutting measures.

Principal input on decisions was sought at weekly meetings. Conflict was handled face to face. When conflict impacts a particular district policy, the policy in question was discussed, reviewed and evaluated by the principals. There were time lines for resolution of an issue.

Risk-taking was encouraged and regularly attempted in this principal’s district. There was much innovation going on. Once a decision was made at the central office level, follow-up was coordinated by the person responsible for the program. The person in charge of follow-up was
clear to all in the district. Everyone was kept posted of progress on various programs. There were no surprises. Key information was disseminated quickly, often by phone. The principal was generally satisfied.

Principal # 15

Principal # 15 reported that his input on decisions was sought early in the process of making a decision. At this stage, the key concepts surfaced. There were many opportunities to voice one's opinion. "Principals are not excluded on anything."

Conflict was handled both formally and informally. Formally, there was a mechanism for achieving administrative due process. More informally, principals were able to discuss their concerns with the superintendent. The principal commented, "the climate is right for such discussions."

Risk taking occurred often. This was only after principals and the superintendent looked at the research, the community and the students who were eventually to be impacted by the new venture. The venture described as the "most significant risk-taking venture the district has ever attempted" was the plan for significant redistricting. It was a highly charged issue which involved the black, white and hispanic communities, the wealthy and the poor. It was
also very political. "We are approaching this venture through the formation of city committees, representing all groups in the city. We are completing a task force study."

Once a decision was made between principals and the superintendent, follow-up occurred through the central office and the principal. The principal indicated that this was a very effective process. Plans conceived jointly were usually multi-faceted, involving workshops to explain the decision, inservices, visitations, and observations. There were different coordinators at the central office level who had the responsibility to coordinate these efforts.

Key information was disseminated by central office. Typically there was a study period to analyze pertinent information.

The respondent indicated he was generally satisfied with his level of empowerment in decision making. He made the point that joint decision making designed to achieve a significant level of empowerment takes time. He felt the district was moving as rapidly as it could in this area.

Anytime you change things based on current research, you have to deal with the process of change. In this process, you don't just jump in a boat and get where you want to go. You have to look at the needs of the community as well as the resources you have to meet those needs. Innovation never comes easy.

The respondent expressed the thought that, in his
nineteen years as principal he has felt some decisions involving significant district change were made for innovation sake, not because the change was really needed. He stated this "this tendency should be carefully monitored."

**Decision Making and Problem Solving**

**Summary of the Survey Data**

**TABLE 34**

**PRESENTATION OF SURVEY DATA**

**DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

**MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS.**

**CURRENT STATUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Cases</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.55</td>
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### Table 35: Presentation of Survey Data

#### Decision Making and Problem Solving

**Means and Standard Deviations.**

**Desired State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

### Table 36: Test of Significance for Decision Making and Problem Solving

**Student Newman-Keuls Test**

\[ \alpha = .05 \quad \text{DF} = 118 \quad \text{MSE} = 11.8428 \]

Means with the same letter are not significantly different.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<th>Status</th>
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</table>
### TABLE 37

**TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

**TUKEY'S STUDENTIZED RANGE TEST**

\[
\text{ALPHA} = .05 \quad \text{DF} = 118 \quad \text{MSE} = 11.8428
\]

**STUDENTIZED RANGE** = 2.80052  \quad **LSD** = 1.2442

Means with the same letter are not significantly different.

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<th>Status</th>
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<td>23.550000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 38

**TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE FOR DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

**BONFERRONI T - TESTS**

\[
\text{ALPHA} = .05 \quad \text{DF} = 118 \quad \text{MSE} = 11.8428
\]

**T Value** = 1.98027  \quad **LSD** = 1.2442

Means with the same letter are not significantly different.

<table>
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TABLE 39  SURVEY QUESTION AND FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION
RELATIVE TO DECISION MAKING
AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Question

The superintendent encourages the development of new ideas/programs by the principal.

<table>
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<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Question

I feel very satisfied with the process of decision making for those decisions which impact my building and which involve the superintendent.

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<th>Current Status</th>
<th>Desired State</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
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Question

The most crucial aspect of decision making is the process by which decisions are made.

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Question

Diversity of opinions and ideas is encouraged and respected by the superintendent.

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<tbody>
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**Question**

Principals are permitted access to information necessary to a productive decision making process.

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**Question**

The superintendent seldom makes a decision that can be made by the building principal.

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# Table 40: Decision Making/Problem Solving

## Current Status

**Value Ranking on Survey: Frequencies, Percent, Cumulative Percent**

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<th>Cum. Percent</th>
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### TABLE 41  DECISION MAKING/PROBLEM SOLVING

**DESIRED STATE**

**VALUE RANKING ON SURVEY: FREQUENCIES, PERCENT, CUMULATIVE PERCENT**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Value Label</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cum. Percent</th>
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</table>
Research Question 1

How is middle school principal empowerment defined and its process characterized specific to the area of decision making and problem solving?

The interview data provided the base for responding to this research question. A definition of empowerment for this focus area was best summarized by one of the respondents.

The goal for empowered decision making is to assist in maximizing outcomes. This means the type of assistance you need to take the ball and run with it. It requires that you are given the tools to accomplish the job, that you are provided the needed direction and that you work in an atmosphere which promotes cooperation and the needed requirements to get the whole process moving. The one doing the empowering needs to create this environment while allowing for the abilities and skills of those he is attempting to empower. (Principal # 15)

A means of distinguishing empowered principals from non-empowered ones appeared connected with the prevailing philosophy of power that operated in the district. The interview data found that non-empowered principals felt their superintendent created an environment where power became the basis for establishing control and managing the
status quo. In contrast, the interview data found that empowered principals viewed power as the basis for planning and achieving their goals.

Importantly, the state of achieved empowerment were found to be impacted by the subordinate's personality (specific to desire for risk-taking and ability and desire to make decisions), his readiness to be empowered and his skills and abilities. On the other side of the equation, the interview data supported the idea that superintendents must first assess and address all three of these characteristics prior to implementing a plan of empowerment.

The interview data positively correlated the achieved level of principal empowerment with the stage the principal became involved in the decision making process. Maximizing one's empowerment was found to contingent on early involvement in decision making, at the point the problem was still being formulated. This point was found to be key not only to successfully resolving the problem but also in encouraging the acceptance of mutual responsibility for ensuring its successful resolution.

These data indicated further that frequent discussions regarding the impact of decisions should occur. Occasional participation was not found to be effective. Superintendents reported by principals to be highly empowering set up regular meetings to discuss follow-up and
provided a means of structured access by principals to the superintendent.

Empowered principals consistently made the statement that the decision making process in their districts focused on significant issues. They were encouraged to bring up new ideas and programs. There was both a spoken and unspoken understanding in their district that new programs involved risk. Superintendents reported to be empowering encouraged educated risk-taking.

The interview data noted staff development to be key in setting up a successful process for empowered decision making. Participants discussed the necessity of acquiring skills in conducting effective meetings, where differences in opinions were heard and consensus reached. An individual’s level of empowerment in this focus area was positively correlated to both his readiness to engage in the process of change and the optimism he reported as to whether the process would result in bringing his goals to fruition.

40% of the interview participants reported that successful empowerment was contingent on someone (usually the superintendent or a consultant) having skills as a group facilitator. In 20% of the districts a model of consensus building and conflict resolution was utilized. The model served to create the means of attaining "win/win" resolutions.
Interview participants indicated that the process of handling information was key to empowerment. Principals interviewed mentioned the importance of being able to get their own items on the agenda, seeing the agenda prior to the meeting, obtaining reliable and well-researched information upon which an eventual decision was based and making sure that information was shared with all members of the decision making group and not shared selectively.

These data further indicated that empowering decision making practices required a means of dealing with conflict and resolving it. In an empowering environment conflict was not something feared, isolated, denied or ignored.

Research Question 2

What do middle school principals report to be the current status of empowerment as experienced in their relationship with their superintendent in the area of decision making and problem solving? Contrast the current status with the desired state.

This analysis will be supported by both interview and survey data. Current and desired states will be presented and contrasted.

The survey data provided a good starting point to respond to this question. These data resulted in a mean score of 23.55 for current status, computed on the six
questions related to this area. The standard deviation was 4.3508. The mean of the desired state relative to this same questions was 27.3. The standard deviation was 2.18.

The Student Newman Keuls, Tukey’s Studentized Range and Bonferroni T-Test findings indicated that the difference between current and desired status was significant. The cumulative percentages for each category were interesting. Approximately one quarter, (27%) scored 21 or below on current status, the same bottom quarter, were at 25 or below, on desired state.

Turning our attention to the interview questions, further insight was gained as to the specific areas of frustration within decision making and problem solving. There were five questions on the survey relative to this area. The first question,

The superintendent encourages the development of new ideas/programs by the principal.

assisted in an understanding of current and desired status of this essential aspect of the definition of empowered decision making. Currently 47% of principals surveyed experience this always, a # 5 ranking on the survey’s likert scale, compared with 63.3% who desired this same level. Although a significant disparity between current and desired state was noted on the first question, it was not as significant or of as much concern as the second question. This question focused on principal satisfaction with the district’s decision making process. The question
I feel very satisfied with the process of decision making for those decisions which impact my building and which involve the superintendent.

32% of the survey respondents were only sometimes to never satisfied with the process of decision making compared with 100% desiring a 4 or 5 level of desire on the question.

In a closer analysis, it appeared that though principals were not satisfied with the decision making process and desired a better one, they were unsure of what a "better process" really meant. They did not seem aware of what an effective process entailed. This resulted in a lack of clarity as to the aspect of the process that they found less than desirable. This conclusion was based on principals responses to the survey question,

The most crucial aspect of decision making is the process by which decisions are made.

Principals’ responses indicated some ambivalence and lack of understanding of the significance of the process of decision making. They did not see the direct link between the process one utilized and the resulting outcomes. Responses to this question were divided into approximate thirds on current status. 30% ranked this question a three, occurs sometimes. 34% gave it a 4, occurs frequently. 28% gave it a five, occurs always. On desired state 12% gave it a 3, 37% gave it a 4 ranking, and
50% gave it a five.

Conclusions from the first three questions were that principals felt their superintendents needed to encourage more new programs. They were very concerned with their current process of decision making and felt it should change. However, though they did not like what they currently experience, they were not sure what they needed or the specifics of what they desired. They knew they had a problem with the process of decision making they currently experienced but they were not clear about what aspects of the process were key to empowered decision making.

If this sounds confusing, the interviews assisted in clarifying. Here these data indicated that principals knew what they do not like in decision making. Those lacking empowerment were quick to refer to the idea that their superintendant did not understand their needs. By their reports he did not take their needs into account. Many, did not feel they were engaged in meaningful decision making.

Though they experienced these problems, they did not express a coherent way of rectifying it. No one interviewed, experiencing low levels of empowerment said, "we need to do A, B, C, and D." Some mentioned some aspect of the decision making process that needed to change but no one put it together in a whole package.
These data led to the conclusion that until principals experience a process favorable to empowerment, they cannot articulate the specific components that are necessary. These data indicated that principals need to experience a model so that they can see how all aspects of an empowering decision making process fit together. Non-empowered principals did not fully comprehend the essence of what was lacking in their current situations, though they noted something was amiss. Without a model by which they can compare and contrast their experiences, it was difficult to get a sense of the entire empowerment process. Instead these principals saw isolated components.

Empowered principals indicated in their interviews that their superintendent encouraged and developed empowering leadership with education, modeling and staff development. Components of the process and the philosophy upon which it was based were identified and addressed. One quarter of the principals who reported empowerment indicated their district had received assistance from other districts who had experience in the process.

The third survey question on this focus area asked whether diversity of opinions was encouraged in the district. The question read,

Diversity of opinions and ideas is encouraged and respected by the superintendent.

31% of principals ranked this 3 or less in current
status compared with 100% who desired a 4 or 5 ranking. (70% wanted a 5 ranking.) The interview data shed light on the disparity between current and desired state. These data indicated that non-empowered principals were experiencing problems with the manner in which their superintendent approached the issue of conflict.

The interview data revealed five maladaptive responses to handling conflict which were reported to result in barriers to constructive decision making. These were superintendents who isolated conflict, ignored it, placed blame, associated it with weakness, and squelched it as soon as it surfaced. These will be discussed in more depth in the next section of this analysis.

The next question on the survey pertaining to decision-making and problem solving read,

Principals are permitted access to information necessary to a productive decision making process.

Again, survey responses indicated a discrepancy between current and desired status. No one gave this question a 5 ranking on current status. 31% gave it a 4 ranking. Over 28% ranked it 3 or lower. This compared with a desired state of 28% at 4 ranking and 72% with a 5 ranking.

The interviews provided additional insight into the specific problems principals faced in obtaining the information necessary to making decisions. Though most
principals reported they received written information on issues, they did not always get it in time for prior review or the information was incomplete.

A high percentage of principals mentioned another type of problem related to "inside, political information" that impacted decisions. Many, had little access to the inside political arena that can impact a decision. i.e. the community group that has a close ear to the superintendent, the board member who has a particular agenda, the influential parent who goes straight to the superintendent, bypassing the principal.

These types of situations significantly impacted the process and final outcome of decision making. Often a principal was unaware of some of the political influences on the decision making process until after a decision had been made. This negatively impacted their ability to experience a heightened sense of empowerment. The key to empowerment as presented in the interview data was through more frank, candid, two-way, discussions between superintendents and principals.

Interview data indicated that in some non-empowering situations, information was disseminated through one to one conferences between superintendents and principals. Superintendents, either because of an uneasiness with group situations or a tendency to be threatened by the actions and behaviors of larger groups,
gave and discussed key information in one to one conferences with principals. If this method was relied on too heavily, principals reported that empowerment did not occur.

Principals indicated the reason they felt this resulted in a barrier to empowerment was that a lack of trust was more likely to develop when principals are not given frequent opportunities to relate as a group with the superintendent. Empowered principals on the other hand reported in their interviews that when given these opportunities, they experienced group consensus building, increased group participation in problem solving, along with an accompanying sense of assumption of mutual responsibility for success. These things occurred while principals gained a global understanding of why things operated the way they did.

The last question read,

The superintendent seldom makes a decision that can be made by the building principal.

Responses to this question on the survey were scattered across the likert scale, resulting in problems identifying and analyzing patterns. The question was worded with a negative, (seldom makes a decision). This was done to comply with survey construction recommendations underscoring the importance of at least one quarter of the survey questions being phrased with a negative. As with any question worded in the negative there probably were
some respondents that did not correctly comprehend the intent of the question. Beyond that possibility, interpreting the results at face value, revealed 28% who gave this question a 5 on current status and 56% who gave it a 5 on desired state. It's very conceivable that even a wider discrepancy than that existed between between current and desired state. This idea is supported by postulating that at least some of the 16% who indicated a 1 or 2 on this question in desired state completed the question quickly, not catching the negative phrasing.

Beyond the analysis gained from studying the survey questions, more interesting insights were gained solely from the interviews. For example, an important aspect of decision making as noted in the definition of empowerment, was the opportunity to offer regular input. Most principals had a regular mechanism of giving input during administrative meetings. But, the process of handling these meetings varied. Differences noted accounted for some of the disparity between current and desired state.

Factors that varied between what principals experienced and what they desired in administrative meetings included the manner in which the agenda was prepared. Principals reported problems with obtaining the agenda before the meeting. They felt this was critical to their ability to review and discuss issues before the meeting. This preliminary review also served to increase
their chance of gaining closure by the time the administrative meeting was scheduled.

Second, the interview data indicated that the person chairing the administrative meeting differed in more empowering versus less empowering districts. Currently, some principals experienced the superintendent chairing the entire administrative meeting. What principals desired was to have the person, who had the most involvement with an item on the agenda or the one responsible for that area chair discussions for that area. Power and responsibility for chairing meetings therefore would be shared.

Further analysis of principal interviews left the impression that there was a natural inclination to linger in one’s current state, not challenging it. This was evidenced by the quick response of some principals to reassure or rationalize why things were the way they were.

It was interesting to compare not only those with marked disparity between current and desired states, but also those where the disparity was minimal. A lot can be gained by looking at principals who got close to empowerment but didn’t quite make it. Actually, this group was larger than those experiencing more significant disparities between current and desired state.

Principals interviewed who fell short of full empowerment in the area of decision making but experienced
aspects of it have superintendents who permitted risk taking but who did nothing to promote it themselves. These superintendents let risk taking occur but they were not the initiators of risk.

These types of superintendents were able to empower some principals. This empowerment resulted largely from the heightened desire and ability on the part of the principal. Principals can experience some level of empowerment with these superintendents if they had high trust levels, strong leadership ability, and did not fear risk. Additionally, principals with more passive superintendents found some level of empowerment only if they were highly motivated and did not need to cling to the status quo.

Empowered principals described the ideal situation to achieve maximum levels of empowerment as a subordinate/superordinate, push-pull relationship where both parties motivated each other in the pursuit of risk, innovation, and responsibility for decision making.

One last note on risk taking, as discussed in chapter two, a characteristic of the type of risk taking attempted in an empowering work environment was educated risk taking. This type of risk taking assumed that all parties who engaged in a new venture were well informed of the alternatives and made decisions based on a sound guiding philosophy and well researched information.
Finally, it is important to close with perhaps the most potentially significant enabler or inhibitor of empowerment identified by the interview respondents, that is the degree to which conditions were linked to the power to make decisions. If the power to take risk or make a decision can be taken away in a flash, (as in the case of Principal # 5), then empowerment does not really exist at all. Actually, was created was the opposite of empowerment, a type of paralysis, grounded in a state of powerlessness.

Research Question 3

What conditions enable and/or inhibit the empowerment process related to decision making as experienced by middle school principals?

This question will delve into the specific factors and the process which serves to enable or inhibit empowerment. Both interview and survey data will be used in the discussion.

Responses to the interview questions found the mechanism and process for handling administrative meetings to have the potential of serving as either an enabler or barrier to empowerment. The more empowered principals were in districts were there was a formalized method of gaining
access to the superintendent. This was particularly important in large districts where there were a variety of central office personnel.

In addition to access to the superintendent, opportunities and encouragement for principals to consult with one another was noted to be key in both the interview and survey findings. In non-empowering environments, principals were discouraged, and in some cases not permitted, to meet together, without the superintendent or other central office personnel being present. Meeting as a group was perceived as threatening in non-empowering environments.

In contrast, in more empowering environments principals in their survey and interview responses indicated they had regular meeting times where they met alone. The purpose of these meetings was perceived to be constructive. It was seen as having the positive outcome of enabling the quick resolution of common concerns, more assumption of responsibility for problems, more collaboration, and a tendency to work on projects supported by mutual interests and skills and not just by role. (i.e. principals only working on issues in their building.)

In less empowering districts, involvement in the decision making process, was characterized by any of the following problems: late participation in problem solving, often after the problem has been identified and
alternatives laid out, participation in matters perceived not to be meaningful. Outcomes of these barriers cited in principal interviews included distancing oneself from the problem, in some cases giving up, not acquiring a global understanding of the district, a lack of awareness of where the district was headed, and finally insufficient means to evaluate the past or set directions for the future.

This lack of input experienced in some districts contributed to the lack of recognition of the professional talent in the district. Their abilities were never fully tapped resulting in a developing sense of resignation or desire to leave the district. Decision making in some districts was perceived as being conducted by an "elite group" in central office seen as distant from the "front line." Often the response was a lack of follow through at the building level to district programs, and in some cases, actual sabotage occurred.

The interview data indicated strongly that communication systems, in order to enable empowered decision making, must be two-way systems, with both principal and superintendent sharing information. One of the keys in empowering communication systems was to address ambiguity where it exists. Of particular importance, was addressing ambiguity when it occurred in relation to the successful accomplishment of district goals and mission.

The pattern for addressing ambiguity was not the
same amongst principals in empowering districts as expressed in the interview data. Principals varied in their approach depending on their leadership style and the group of principals with whom they worked. i.e. new principals versus a principal group that hasn’t experienced much transition, highly skilled veterans versus rookies new to administration.

Some superintendents were reported to permit a decision making process to take shape, allowing principals tremendous discretion, others provided a good deal of initial direction and let principals go from there. The common trend among empowering superintendents was they never permitted a state of ambiguity to extend for long or allow it to negatively impact a highly significant area. The way one empowered principal put it, "He (the superintendent) will never let ambiguity go so far as to compromise or lose sight of the mission of the district."

The mechanism for handling information in the district can also be a significant enablers or barrier depending on how the process was conducted. Interview data indicated that insufficient information, or information not provided in a timely fashion, resulted in attributing a lack of importance to the decision making process and in some cases poor decisions. Limited information impacted the type of leadership modeled in the district. With limited information, principals stressed the management
aspects of an issue, rather than, the leadership aspects.

The successful handling of conflict was key to empowered decision making as expressed in both the survey and interview data. It was also tied to the level of significant risk taking attempted in the district. If conflict was not resolved, principals found themselves, "going it alone."

Another problem cited by 25% of the principals interviewed was when superintendents set a tone that failure would not be tolerated. In these instances risk taking was difficult to impossible to undertake. Principals in these types of districts felt their superintendent was not really empowering them but rather engaging in a series to engender positive public relations. These principals felt it was safer for them to allow the superintendent to establish a direction for them.

Isolating conflict was described as a barrier to empowerment by 33% of the interview participants. It resulted in unsuccessful attempts at resolving a problem. Key issues were ignored in the process.

Ignoring conflict was a problem mentioned by 25% of principals. Ignoring it, created the same problems as isolation and additionally built a sense of frustration, and lack of trust. When the superintendent was the one doing the ignoring, it implied to principals that the issues they were addressing either didn’t matter or were
not of concern to the superintendent.

When the superintendent provided no response to conflict, or if conflict was isolated, principals missed having access to an integral ingredient to their own empowerment, that is they did not have an opportunity to know where the superintendent stood on an issue. Opportunities for principals and the superintendent to galvanize around certain issues were lacking. Leadership was not exhibited. Conflict in empowering districts served the purpose of calling into consciousness the values and belief system of the district. In so doing, the values and district mission are reinforced.

Non-empowered principals indicated that when superintendents placed blame they became fearful of identifying problems relative to key areas of concerns. Principals in these situations may have kept things in shape on the surface, but they covered up or disguised what was really occurring. This worked against common resolution or sharing of responsibility.

25% of the interview participants reported that their superintendent tended to place blame every time a failure occurred. This group felt their superintendent associated failure with professional weakness or a lack of skill. Along this same line, 60% of the interview respondents spoke of a "grey area" within their communication with the superintendent. This was defined
as feeling cautious and being tentative about bringing up certain areas of concern with the superintendent. They feared that doing this might result in their superintendent perceiving them to be professionally weak.

Principals who experienced a system where conflict was squelched indicated the results were even more devastating than ignoring the problem. Principals who found themselves in this situation indicated that if they take significant risk, by laying their "dirt out on the table" their superintendent was likely to terminate the discussion or divert to another issue. They felt they received a warning from their superintendent. That being, new venture must be successful because if they weren't the superintendent didn't want to hear about it and he certainly didn't want the public to know.

One final note on conflict, there can be a dual edged sword in terms of dealing with conflict, as noted in more affluent communities within the interview data. In these communities there was a call or demand from the community for higher standards of excellence. The administration in these communities typically felt a need to be "on the cutting edge, to innovate."

Hand in hand, with the expectation to innovate was the sometimes stated, sometimes unstated, expectation that "whatever we try, better be good and successful."
Underlying this was the sense that failure would not
be tolerated. Problems occurred when the superintendent was perceived to assume that all attempts at innovation would meet with success. Principals reported this created stress, frustration, a tendency on their part to emphasize the status quo.

The component separating more empowering from less empowering superintendents in more affluent districts was the reason the superintendent was interested in empowerment. The interview data found that each of the principals in affluent districts reported some attempts on the part of their superintendents to empower them. The basis for differences in their level of achieved empowerment were tied to the reasons they cited for the superintendent's interest in empowerment.

Moves to empower resulted in powerlessness, instead of empowerment if the superintendent was primarily interested in public relations. In those instances, the empowering attempts were perceived by principals as a form of manipulation.

To illustrate this point, comments from two principals, both from affluent districts will be presented. The first principal shows evidence of the problems just outlined. The second principal shows evidence of actually being empowered.

Principal A

There are real attempts to empower here. The superintendent wants to involve teachers in
decision making. Principals are given discretion. We are expected to innovate.

The superintendent won’t be around here long. I know that. He wants and needs to make a name for himself. Then he will move on. Public relations is extremely important to him. He wants us to be on the cutting edge. Innovation is important to him. He expects us to be doing that. He also expects us to not screw up.

Principal B

The superintendent believes in empowerment. He want competent personnel at all levels to be involved in decision making. He knows this involves risk on our part and his.

When the bottom falls out and there is a crisis, he is there supporting you. He doesn’t quake under pressure. He is aware of what is involved in taking risk and trying new things. He doesn’t lay blame.

He wants you to think things through but he understands that everything cannot be predicted.

One other thing about him, (superintendent) if a principal wants to go ahead with something that the superintendent does not want to do, he allows the principal to do that. If you really believe in something, he will stand by you, with the community, with the board, with your teachers.

A potential barrier to be investigated further was evidence for increased tolerance for failure, stagnation, and retention of the status quo in lower socio-economic areas. All except one of the principals of schools with a predominantly lower socio-economic student body, (20% of principals interviewed), reported a higher level of acceptance of the problems stated.

Though attempts to take risk and innovate were
positively regarded in some of these districts, they did not have the necessary resources to bring these goals to fruition. Most significantly, districts with a largely poor and mostly minority student body tended to be so overwhelmed with a number of major concerns that they had little time to think about the benefits of empowerment.

In some ways these schools have the most to gain from the potential benefits of empowerment. But as presented in this study, the process of empowerment takes time, energy, and resources to enact. If the district is operating from a crisis disposition it makes empowerment seem untenable.