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ABSTRACT

Teacher empowerment was one of eight criteria required by the Ohio Department of Education for funding as part of its Venture Capital Schools in Ohio program. This report, part of a larger study, identifies and summarizes dimensional definitions of teacher empowerment in school restructuring literature in order to enlarge the vision of Venture Capital School Planning teams and to suggest roles for classroom teachers that might otherwise have been overlooked. In the literature, the conceptual continuum of teacher empowerment ranged from power handed down to classroom teachers through the school's hierarchical structure (usually from the principal) to self-empowerment through professional growth and knowledge. A number of strategies for empowering teachers are examined, along with the results of several studies. The most frequently identified dimension of empowerment was decision making; others mentioned frequently were collegiality/collaboration, professional knowledge, self-efficacy, autonomy, and status of classroom teachers. Less frequently mentioned were authority, curriculum planning/design, impact/causal importance, leadership, mentoring, responsibility, and self esteem. Study findings suggest that to participate in school restructuring, teachers must pursue knowledge beyond that of subject content and pedagogy. Their professional knowledge must include a thorough grounding in both the philosophy and processes of the change model adopted by their school. (Contains 34 references.) (ND)

Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment: Identifying New Roles for Classroom Teachers in Restructuring Schools

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Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment: Identifying New Roles for Classroom Teachers in Restructuring Schools

Context for the Study

Since 1986, the focus of school reform has dramatically shifted from externally imposed standards to the analysis of a school's internal structure (Holmes Group, 1986, 1990; Levine, 1988; Goodlad, 1990; Elmore, 1990; Sarason, 1992; Sizer, 1992; Comer, 1988). The Venture Capital Schools in Ohio are a part of the new wave of school reform generated by this focus. This departure from top-down reform has necessitated a change in the role of state legislatures. "If states are serious about improving the quality of education and striving for excellence they must create a context in which organizational competence at the school level can develop" (Timar & Kirp 1989, p. 511). In Ohio, this context was created through funding by the state legislature. Venture Capital Grants of $25,000 were offered to serve as catalysts for local schools to redesign their internal structures and were made available to individual schools for a period of five years on a renewable basis. These grants were envisioned as "sparks" for school renewal efforts.

Local school districts were asked to nominate schools. Following the districts' nominations, proposals describing the nature of the proposed reform were submitted by individual schools. As conditions for applying for funding, the schools had to provide evidence that 1) at least 80% of their school staff supported of the ideas contained in the proposal, and 2) evidence that the building staff was poised and ready to undertake the proposed changes. Eight factors were identified by the State Department of Education as being essential to continuous school improvement. Using these eight factors as evaluative criteria for proposals, 307 schools were funded by the state legislature in rounds I and II. The following is a discussion of evaluative criterion 6 "Evidence that teachers are given expanded roles in planning and implementing change" (Ohio State Department of Education, July 1993, p. 10).

Statement of the Problem

Teacher empowerment is described by researchers as essential to the success of school restructuring efforts. Educators advocating school restructuring seek to change the role of teachers both within and beyond the classroom (Holmes Group, 1986, 1990; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Sarason, 1990; Griffin, 1991; Fullan, 1993). Although criterion 6 was required for funding by the Ohio Department of Education, the new roles for teachers were not delineated. Because the school restructuring initiatives

were locally designed, the "expanded roles for teachers" were to be defined at the school level.

Purpose

This part of a larger study (Klecker, 1996), identifies and summarizes dimensional definitions of teacher empowerment in school restructuring literature. These dimensions were routinely described as, "new roles for teachers." This summary, prepared for the 307 Ohio Venture Capital School planning teams in February, 1995, may be useful for others undertaking school restructuring. This description of teacher empowerment was presented to enlarge the vision of Venture Capital School planning teams, and to suggest roles for classroom teachers that might otherwise have been overlooked.

Definitions of Teacher Empowerment

In the literature, the conceptual continuum of teacher empowerment had definable endpoints. At one boundary, was the vision of teacher empowerment as power handed down to classroom teachers by someone above them in the public school's hierarchical structure (usually the building principal). At the other end, teacher empowerment was viewed as a facet of self-empowerment; empowerment through professional growth and knowledge.

Maeroff (1988, p. xiii) described strategies for empowering teachers that assumed the involvement of an external agent, "...teachers should be raised in status,

made more competent at their craft, and given entree to the decision-making process." Empowerment was to be defined by those who were in positions of authority within the school system. Maeroff (1988, p. 55) further stated:

> There is nothing about empowerment that precludes consultation with authorities. It certainly appears worth the risk to give teachers more control over the curriculum development. But the product ought to be carefully monitored.

Maeroff identified three key areas that were essential for teacher empowerment: status, knowledge, and access to decision-making.

Yonemura (1986, p. 474) described "...the satisfaction and empowerment which derive from the adventures of minds that are freed to think." She stated that teachers can be empowered by involvement in the invention of the curricula, ongoing peer relations, and child study. This definition of teacher empowerment described the concept as a process within the teacher's microcosm and included elements of professional development, increased decision making, and collaboration. Gore (1989, p. 8) argued that this vision of empowerment may, "...alter power relations within the classroom, but does little to address the institutional and societal arrangements which limit the possibilities of teachers' work."

In an article titled, On Goodness in Schools: Themes of Empowerment, Lightfoot (1986, p. 9) stated "Empowerment refers to the opportunities a person has for autonomy, responsibility, choice, and authority." She urged that the expression of

empowerment in schools needs to be felt at every level--by students, teachers, and administrators. Agreeing with the need for empowerment of all school participants, Wayson & Hoffman (in press) stated:

> Two major purposes for empowering school staff members have received too little attention: 1) if students are to become problem-solving decision makers, they must be surrounded by adults who model that behavior, and 2) school staffs, like all people, are more committed to and feel more responsibility for decisions they make (p. 315).

Hogan (1983, cited in Prawat, 1991, p. 756) stated "Empowering relationships involve feelings of 'connectedness' that are developed in situations of equality, caring, and mutual purpose and interaction." Sprague (1992) stated that teacher status was the essential element of empowerment and identified five qualities of teachers' work that result in their lack of status/power: 1) the feminization of teachers' work, 2) the technologizing of teachers' work, 3) the deskilling of teachers' work, 4) the intensification of teachers' work, and 5) the privitazitation of teachers' work. Sharing this view, Levin (1991) described the traditional role of the classroom teacher:

> Almost all of the planning and design [of the curriculum] is the responsibility of the district administration and its educational service specialists. At the elementary level, much of the school program is based upon district adoptions of a publisher's series in each subject that consist of a package of student texts and workbooks with teacher's guides and tests...Within the guidelines set by higher levels of government and by local school boards, the district administration plans the curriculum, resource allocation, personnel selection, and the myriad details of school organization and daily school life. The implementation of these policies is left to individual schools and especially classroom teachers (p. 5).

Lieberman & Miller (1990, p. 762) wrote, "The authentic inclusion of teachers in schoolwide decision making depends as much on principals' attitudes and beliefs as on their [teachers] possession of certain process skills." These authors further suggested that the success of teachers in school restructuring depended on teachers assuming two new roles, colleagueship and leadership, which, "...are not standard behaviors for teachers in typical schools" (Ibid). Zeichner (1991) recognized the isolation of the classroom teacher and suggested:

> Teachers must be given the time and resources to participate in the various non-instructional activities that are increasingly open to them. One way to do this is to provide teachers with time during the school day to engage in non-instructional tasks (p. 367).

Rappaport (1987) identified self-efficacy, self-esteem, and causal importance as elements of empowerment. In a study of empowerment in communities, he found that an individual's sense of empowerment was directly related to the individual's sense of participation in the community. Rappaport described the construct of empowerment as a joining of personal competencies and abilities to environments "...that provide opportunities for choice and autonomy in demonstrating those competencies" (1987, p. 122). Dunst (1991, cited in Short & Rinehart, 1992, p. 952) "...has suggested that empowerment consists of two issues: (a) enabling experiences, provided within an organization that fosters autonomy, choice, control, and responsibility, which (b) allow the individual to display existing competencies as well as learn new competencies that

support and strengthen functioning." The descriptions of empowerment by Rappaport and Dunst draw the extremes of the continuum together. Teacher empowerment clearly requires a combination of the necessary "consent" from the organization as well as the "change from within" to facilitate individual growth within a restructuring environment.

Teacher Empowerment Defined in Empirical Studies

In the following empirical studies of teacher empowerment in restructuring schools, researchers have defined and operationalized the construct in a variety of ways. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to examine these definitions of teacher empowerment.

Using the case study method, Boles (1990) interviewed four teachers to explore their definitions of empowerment. The teachers' descriptions included:

> 'It means control over my work environment. Power means being able to make my own decisions, to have say in budget, staffing, scheduling. It means to have control over my workplace.' Another explained, 'The project to me is power. I think the project has tremendous potential to be very powerful if we use it the right way. We're still learning how to use it and I think if we learn how to meet well together and how to work well as a decision-making group we can influence the things that bother me at the school, and those are the frenetic pace of school, the intrusive quality of assemblies, things like that' (p. 42).

Martin (1990) studied, "...teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership behaviors in relationship to gaining pedagogical confidence and power" (p. 3). She

developed two instruments. The first was to measure teachers' perceptions of the leadership behaviors of supervisors. This instrument had three dimensions:

1. Interpersonal Behaviors to Remove Boundaries - the ability to non-verbally and verbally communicate belief, trust, and confidence in teacher efficacy, knowledge/skills, decision making.

2. Responsive Motivational Builders - the ability to give direct and indirect feedback in a non-threatening manner;

3. Clinical Behaviors in relationship to teacher empowerment with instructional improvement processes (p. 9).

The second instrument was designed to measure teacher empowerment on three dimensions:

1. Teacher Efficacy - a teacher's belief that he/she has the knowledge/skills to affect student learning when power is entrusted.

2. Leadership Efficacy - a teacher's perception that he/she has the ability to function as a leader when the responsibility is entrusted.

3. Decision-making Efficacy - a teacher's perception of his/her ability to make instructional decisions in relationship to expected outcomes (p. 10).

Martin surveyed 81 teachers from five rural counties in middle Tennessee. She found that the respondents preferred principals to supervisors as instructional leaders; they were moderately satisfied with principals' behaviors with regard to teacher empowerment. The more that supervisors concentrated on a collegial relationship, the

more teachers perceived them as professional mentors. Supportive behavior by the principal tended to influence 1) leadership efficacy (r =.71) and 2) shared pedagogical concerns (r =.73). When principals were perceived to have instructional knowledge, teachers tended to discuss their instructional difficulties (r =.78).

Ruscoe, Whitford, Egginton & Esselman (1989) surveyed 1065 teachers and 85 administrative staff employed in professional development schools. Their survey included the measures of teacher efficacy and teacher empowerment. Efficacy was measured by assessing the respondents' self-rating of their ability to increase student learning. Empowerment was defined in this study as, "...a measure of the influence teachers had over curriculum decisions within their classrooms and the teacher's role in decision making beyond the classroom" (p. 4). Gender and level differences emerged in the analysis of the data. These researchers found that women generally expressed a stronger sense of efficacy than men; elementary teachers expressed a stronger sense of efficacy than middle school teachers, who in turn express a stronger sense of efficacy than secondary teachers. Men generally expressed a greater sense of overall empowerment than did women, especially regarding decision making beyond the classroom. Respondents who expressed a strong sense of personal effectiveness as a teacher also expressed a strong sense of empowerment in terms of decision making both within and beyond the classroom.

Using the Teacher Empowerment Inventory (TEI) (Butler, Etheridge, James & Ellis, 1989), Morris & Nunnery (1993), surveyed 140 teachers in six schools in a professional development school collaborative to "...determine the extent to which Memphis State University's (MSU) Professional Development Schools (PDS) model influenced teachers' perceptions of their empowerment along four dimensions" (p. 5). The four dimensions measured by the sixteen-item TEI were:

1. Mentoring Self-Efficacy: extent to which teachers feel empowered with respect to influence on entrance into the profession and training of new teachers.

2. Teaching Self-Efficacy: sense of status, self-esteem, and professionalism as teachers.

3. Professional Knowledge: teacher's self-perceived competencies in content knowledge and teaching skills.

4. Collegiality: extent to which teachers' believe they work with and influence their peers in improving teaching and learning in their school (Ibid).

The researchers found that teachers in the Professional Development Schools felt that their participation in the program enhanced their empowerment on all of the above dimensions. African-American teachers had significantly higher scores than non-minority teachers on every scale of the teacher empowerment questionnaire. Thirty-six percent of the respondents were African-American; 89 percent were female. Interestingly, decision making was not a dimension of teacher empowerment in this study.

Decision making was the single definition of teacher empowerment in a study by Moore & Esselman (1992). Surveying 1,802 Kansas City (Missouri) teachers, they explored the relationship between 1) teacher efficacy, 2) empowerment, 3) focused instructional climate, and 4) student achievement. Teacher empowerment was defined in this study as the perceived influence of teachers in important decision-making activities. This decision making was explored on two dimensions: classroom-based and school-based. They found that teachers' perception of empowerment was dependent upon their influence in school-based decision making (i.e., 40% of the variance of measured empowerment was accounted for by this factor). They found that providing teachers with greater decision-making authority may well have improved teacher work conditions and self-image, but there was little evidence that these efforts will improved student achievement when grade levels, school levels, and test content vary.

Using structured interviews and qualitative methodology, Lichtenstein, McLaughlin & Knudsen (1991) gathered data from 30 high school mathematics teachers involved in the Los Angeles and San Francisco projects of the Urban Mathematics Collaborative (UMC). The researchers' view of teacher empowerment was based on professional knowledge defined as "...knowledge of professional community, educational policy, and subject area" (p. 5). They argued that teachers' development of

professionally relevant knowledge is necessary for genuine teacher empowerment. They reported that 1) subject matter knowledge provided a basis for collegiality, 2) breadth and depth of disciplinary knowledge provided the foundation of teacher's authority, and 3) disciplinary knowledge had direct relevance in policy decisions, that is, the more knowledge the teachers had about their subject the more they were able to influence school-wide decisions on curricula. Further, the teachers' knowledge of their professional community expanded their notions of what was possible and helped them recognize their own expertise. This study presented a well-reasoned argument for emphasizing professional knowledge as a dimension of teacher empowerment.

White (1992) conducted over one hundred personal interviews with teachers and administrators in three school districts in Montana, California, and Minnesota. These districts were undergoing restructuring with an emphasis on decentralization of authority to teachers. She found that teachers who indicated the highest degree of involvement in school decision making also perceived the most benefits of decentralization. This correlation between degree of involvement by teachers and perceived benefits indicated the importance of involving teachers to the highest degree possible. Teachers' responses indicated that their input in school decision making had a direct relationship with how they perceived their jobs and themselves. Involvement in decision making increased teachers' self-esteem and interest in teaching.

Bredeson (1989) examined how principals defined empowerment in their schools and the distinctions principals made in contrasting their leadership and teacher empowerment with more traditionally organized schools. Bredeson conducted structured interviews with 5 elementary and 5 secondary school principals. Bredeson stated that although a clear definition of teacher empowerment may not be readily apparent in the current literature on school reform, these principals could quickly describe what empowerment meant in terms of their buildings:

> 'Teachers are invited to participate in the way the school is managed.' 'This is a systematic way to improve the educational climate...and this is connected to our district's goals and priorities for the products of learning, work environment, and the relationships between people.'
> 'The idea is for teachers and administrators to share in the ownership on matters that affect us both. The focus is on daily worklife issues it is in the sands of daily operations where things happen.' 'The goal here is for teachers to have ownership in decisions in their worklife. To make the workplace a better life and to solve real problems.' 'To me shared governance is involving professional staff in things that are related to their job and that impact instruction and quality of the work place. I don't involve teachers in petty things. That doesn't make them feel professional' (p. 7).

Short (1992) presented six empirically-derived dimensions of teacher empowerment:

> Decision-making relates to the participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly affect their work. In many cases, this means participation in decisions involving budgets, teacher selection, scheduling, curriculum, and other programmatic areas...

> Professional Growth refers to teachers' perceptions that the school in which they work provides them with opportunities to grow and develop as professionals, to learn continuously, and to expand one's own knowledge and skills through the work life of the school...
>
> Status refers to teacher perceptions that they have professional respect and admiration from colleagues. Teachers feel that others respect their knowledge and expertise...
>
> Self-Efficacy refers to teachers' perceptions that they have the skills and ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and can effect changes in student learning...
>
> Autonomy refers to the teachers' sense of freedom to make certain decisions that control certain aspects of their work life. These aspects may be scheduling, curriculum, textbooks, and instructional planning...
>
> Impact refers to the teachers' sense that they have an effect and influence on school life. They feel that what they are doing is worthwhile, they are doing it in a competent manner, and they are recognized for their accomplishments... (p.9-14).

Summary of Teacher Empowerment Literature

Table 1 presents a summary of the 14 dimensions of teacher

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place Table 1 about here

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empowerment identified through this literature review. The most frequently identified dimension was Decision Making, defined as an important dimension both within and beyond the classroom. Collegiality/collaboration was the next most frequently mentioned dimension. Professional Knowledge was defined as the *sine qua non* for empowerment by Lichtenstein, McLauglin, & Knudsen (1991). These authors

wrote that all other dimensions were dependent upon this one (knowledge is power). Self-efficacy, the teachers' belief that they could increase student learning, was a frequently mentioned dimension of empowerment; this one seemed closely related to the Venture Capital Schools' goal of increasing student learning. The definition of Autonomy, control over the teaching environment, was closely associated with Decision Making. The Status of the classroom teacher can be defined as one of perception--the perception of the community, the school personnel, the students, and/or the perception of the teacher. Authority, Curriculum Planning/Design, Impact/Causal Importance, Leadership, Mentoring, Responsibility, and Self-Esteem were less frequently mentioned dimensions of teacher empowerment.

Dimensions that Require Changes in the School Structures

The first six dimensions of empowerment (Table 1) require changes in the traditional school structure: Authority, Autonomy, Curriculum Planning/Design, Collegiality/Collaboration, Decision Making, and Impact/Causal Importance. Collegiality/Collaboration requires release periods for classroom teachers during the school day and opportunities for team teaching. Descriptions of Decision Making included teachers' participation within the classroom (decisions such as what should be taught and how it should be presented) and beyond the classroom (decisions on such matters as school budget, hiring personnel, and curriculum). Teachers' Impact, Leadership, and Mentoring roles are connected and assume opportunities for teachers

beyond the classroom. Teachers' leadership in mentoring could include interaction with both preservice teachers and beginning teachers/interns.

Dimensions of Self-Empowerment

Professional Growth, Professional Knowledge, Responsibility, Self-Efficacy, Self-Esteem, and Status are dimensions of teacher empowerment that are not necessarily dependent upon changes in the school environment--although they can be facilitated by environments "...that provide opportunities for choice and autonomy in demonstrating those competencies" (Rapport, 1987, p. 122). The classroom teachers' professional knowledge has traditionally included general knowledge (typically the liberal arts), knowledge of the subject taught, and knowledge of pedagogy. To participate in their restructuring schools, teachers must pursue further knowledge. The teachers' professional knowledge must include a thorough grounding in both the philosophy and processes of the change model adopted by their school. Teachers with excellent oral and written communication skills will have the most Impact within and beyond the school environment. To participate in planning and implementing, teachers in restructuring schools need professional knowledge about how groups work and how consensus is reached. Knowledge of assessment and testing is essential if classroom teachers are to be instrumental in increasing and evaluating student learning. An important part in increasing student learning is having the skills to help students assess their learning. Professional Growth activities, rather than being designed as one day

"inservice" projects by the administration, can be self-selected and self-designed by the classroom teachers. Professional Growth activities to increase teachers' Self-Efficacy, the teachers' perceptions that they have the skills and ability needed to effect changes in student learning, should be a main area of focus for the Venture Capital School restructuring teams.

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Table 1. Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment in School Reform Literature

Dimension of Teacher Empowermet	Author (s)
Authority	Lightfoot (1986)
Autonomy	Boles (1990) Common (1985) Dunst (1991, cited in Short & Rinehart, 1992) Lightfoot (1986) Short (1992)
Curriculum Planning/Design	Levin (1991) Maeroff (1988) Yonemura (1986)
Collegiality/ Collaboration	Boles (1990) Bredenson (1989) Lieberman & Miller (1990) Morris & Nunnery (1993) Rappaport (1987) Yonemura (1986) Zeichner (1991)
Decision Making	Boles (1990) Bredenson (1989) Lightfoot (1986) Lieberman & Miller (1990) Maeroff (1988) Martin (1990) Moore & Esselman (1992) Ruscoe, Whitford, Eddington, & Esselman (1989) Short (1992) Wayson & Hoffman (in press) White (1992) Zeichner (1991)

Continued

Table 1. (Continued) Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment in School Reform Literature

Dimension of Teacher Empowermet	Author (s)
Impact/Causal Importance	Rappaport (1987) Short (1992)
Leadership	Lieberman & Miller (1990) Martin (1990)
Mentoring	Morris & Nunnery (1993)
Professional Growth	Short (1992) Yonemura (1986) Zeichner (1991)
Professional Knowledge	Lichtenstein, McLaughlin, & Knudsen (1991) Maeroff (1988) Morris & Nunnery (1993) Yonemura (1986)
Responsibility	Lightfoot (1986)
Self-Efficacy	Martin (1990) Morris & Nunnery (1993) Rappaport (1987) Ruscoe, Whitford, Eddington, & Esselman (1989) Short (1992)
Self-Esteme	Rappaport (1987)
Status	Levin (1991) Maeroff (1988) Short (1992) Sprague (1992)

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