Campus-Level Decision-Making Practices: Principals and Teachers Differ in Their Views*

Cindi Noel
John R. Slate
Michelle Brown
Carmen Tejeda-Delgado

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Abstract

With the implementation of site-based decision-making occurring in schools, the extent to which teachers perceive their involvement in decisions on planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and campus-level organization and the extent to which teachers' views of their involvement in these activities are congruent with the views of principals, is largely unknown. Examined in this study were the views of 288 principals and teachers at high performing schools and low performing schools concerning shared decision-making practices in the areas of: planning; budgeting; curriculum; staffing patterns; staff development; and, organization. Statistically significant differences were present between principals and teachers in all six decision-making areas, with principals viewing teachers as having significantly more involvement in these decisions than was perceived by teachers. Implications of these findings are discussed.

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1 Introduction

The American educational system in the United States continues in a process of educational reform that began with the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983) over 25 years ago. School districts have restructured their schools through state mandated, participatory site-based management, believed to increase the autonomy of the school staff and empowers teachers (Rodriguez & Slate, 2005a, 2005b). Historically, a significant amount of research supports the opinion that principals have implemented authoritarian techniques in the decision-making process. Some principals have been unwilling to share or surrender their control, rather than involving school staff in the collaborative decision-making process. However, research supports that decision-making plays a crucial role in teacher empowerment, strengthening and increasing teacher effectiveness (Short, 1996, 1998).

With national efforts underway to reform schools, site-based management (Howell, 1999) has been mandated in many states. Texas, for instance, responded to school reform efforts by passing Senate Bill 1 in 1990, which mandated the implementation of site-based decision-making (SBDM). Senate Bill 1 established new funding patterns, student and school accountability procedures, and a site-based management program for Texas public schools (Kemper & Teddlie, 2000). The bill further mandated that schools are required by law to have a decision-making council with equal representation of staff members, parents, and stakeholders on the school-site councils.

A site-based management program, as interpreted by Texas public school administrators, allows schools to improve education by increasing the autonomy of the school staff by allowing them to make site-decisions through collaborative decision-making (Brown & Boyle, 1999; Chrispeels, Castillo, & Brown, 2000; Kemper & Teddlie, 2000; Lashway, 1996; Smaby, Harrison, & Nelson, 1989). Site-based decision-making is based on a philosophical belief that some decisions, which are traditionally made by district-level administration, are moved to the school, and some decisions made by the school principal are shared with faculty, students, and members of the community (Madison Public Schools, 1996).

Site-based decision-making, a process of decentralization in which the school becomes the primary unit of management of educational improvement, creates an avenue for the input of teachers, support staff, parents and the community—individuals who have first hand knowledge of the issues (Everett, 1998). In this process, school boards and superintendents are asked to relinquish control to the local school community (Riley, 1999). Compliance for the Texas site-based mandate has been left up to the local independent school district; however, Kemper and Teddlie (2000) stated that there is "no mechanism to ensure that the spirit and letter of the law were carried out" (p. 196).

As stakeholders take part in the site-based decision-making process, it helps educators manage the school, and then holds them responsible for results (Texas Education Agency, 2002). As a result, principals, teachers, and other school personnel at the local site may be substantially changing the way they have traditionally conducted routine business. The traditional authoritarian and autocratic school principal as the sole decision maker has been lessened as shared decision-making brings decisions to a new accountability (Kowalski, 1993). According to Howell (1999), the role of the principal is reinforced by offering leadership that influences, facilitates, and manages the change process. Building principals are asked to move from being the sole decision-maker in control to being an instructional leader operating in a school governance environment (Klecker, 1998). As school administrators have undergone this educational restructuring,they are learning how to create environments that develop quality teacher empowerment. The principal's role in empowering teachers is crucial, given that the principal must understand the concept of power and its reciprocal empowerment (Kowalski, 1993). Brown and Boyle (1999) suggested that teachers appear more willing participants in shared decision-making if they perceive their relationships with their principals to be more open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive.

To date, only limited information is available concerning the extent to which shared decision-making is actually occurring at individual school campuses. To what extent do teachers perceive they are involved in decisions involving planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and campus-level organization? To what extent are teachers' views of their involvement in these activities congruent with the views of principals, the individuals with whom they must share authority? Of particular interest is

the extent to which differences might be present in the views of shared decision-making practices between principals and teachers at schools that are regarded as high performing compared to schools regarded as low performing.

2 Research Questions

1. What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level planning?
2. What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level budgeting?
3. What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level curriculum?
4. What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level staffing patterns?
5. What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level staff development?
6. What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level organization?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

The target population included all 1,660 Texas high school principals and teachers. A portion of the pool of subjects was acquired utilizing the Texas Education Agency's ASKTED program. Of the more than 1,660 contacts made, 287 respondents agreed to participate and submitted a completed survey. While a sample was drawn from the overall target population, the results are not broadly generalizable to the overall population because they are based on the respondents who were willing to participate. Approximately 72% of the participants were White ($n = 207$), and the remaining participants were relatively unevenly distributed across Hispanics (20%, $n = 57$), African Americans (6%, $n = 17$), and others (2%, $n = 6$). Respondents were comprised of 47% female ($n = 134$) and 53% male ($n = 152$). Approximately half, or 52%, were teacher responses ($n = 149$), whereas the rest, 46%, were principal responses ($n = 138$). Of the principal and teacher respondents, 44% had 1 to 5 years experience ($n = 125$), followed by 27% for 6 to 10 years of experience ($n = 76$), 5.9% had between 11 to 15 years of school experience ($n = 17$), and 24% had 16 or more years experience ($n = 69$).

The majority of participants were employed at suburban districts (43.9%, $n = 126$) as opposed to rural (29.6%, $n = 85$) and urban (26.5%, $n = 76$) school districts. Accordingly, the majority of participants worked at large schools (50.2%, $n = 144$), followed by medium size schools (30.3%, $n = 87$), and small schools (19.5%, $n = 56$). Relying on the Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System report (AEIS), 44.9% of respondents were employed at Academically Acceptable campuses ($n = 129$), 40.8% at Academically Recognized campuses ($n = 117$), 36 from Exemplary campuses ($n = 36$), and 1.7% of participants were working at Academically Unacceptable campuses ($n = 5$).

For purposes of this study, high performing campuses are those school campuses that received a rating of Exemplary or of Academically Recognized by the Texas Education Agency. For a campus or district to receive this rating, at least 80.0% of all students and students in each subgroup (e.g, ethnic membership, economically disadvantaged) meeting minimum size requirements must pass each section of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (i.e., Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Social Studies) (Texas Education Agency, 2002). For purposes of this study, low performing campuses are defined as those school campuses that received an Academically Acceptable or Academically Unacceptable rating by the Texas Education Agency. For a campus or district to receive this rating, below 80.0% of all students and students in each subgroup group meeting minimum size requirements did not pass each section of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

3.2 Instrumentation

A survey instrument, entitled *Site-Based Decision-Making Survey in Texas High Schools*, was created which included questions with a five-point Likert Scale. Items for the survey were developed after an extensive and intensive analysis of the available research literature. The content validity of the survey was assessed using a Delphi Technique, with members of the Delphi panel consisting of experts, principals, and former principals ($n = 6$) who carefully reviewed the instrument for content, clarity, and appropriateness of the items.

For purposes of this study, site-based decision-making is defined as a process for decentralizing decisions to improve the educational outcomes at every school campus through a collaborative effort. Through this integrated process, superintendents, district staff, principals, teachers, campus staff, parents, and community and business representatives assess educational outcomes of all students. Through this assessment, performance objectives and strategies are generated, followed by implementation of these developed strategies, which are then adjusted, as needed, to improve student achievement for all students (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

The internal consistency or reliability of the scores obtained from this survey was assessed through use of Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Gay and Airasian (2000) reported that "The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient deals with the internal consistency of tests that are scored with more than two choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree" (p. 193). A pilot study with principals and teachers employed at either high or at low performing high schools, who were not part of the actual study, was conducted to measure reliability. An item analysis yielded an overall coefficient alpha of .96.

Following administration of this survey to all 287 participants, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was again calculated. The internal consistency of each of the six subscales: planning; budgeting; curriculum; staffing patterns; staff development; and, organization was assessed. For the campus-level planning scale, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .80 whereas the coefficient alpha was .62 for budgeting. Concerning curriculum issues, the internal consistency was .79. For the remaining three scales of staffing patterns, staff development, and organization, the coefficient alphas were .84, .86, and .83, respectively. Thus, the scores on all six scales were deemed to have sufficient reliability for research purposes.

3.3 Procedures

The purpose of the survey was to collect data to identify perceptions of principals and teachers employed at either high or at low performing schools concerning shared decision-making practices in the previously mentioned areas. To gather data, online surveys were sent to randomly selected high and low performing high school principals and teachers in Texas. Each principal and teacher received an email with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and guaranteeing strict confidence. Surveys were administered via email to respondents who were requested to respond within a three-week period.

4 Results

4.1 Research Question One

What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level planning?

To address this research question, the five survey items that comprised campus-level planning issues were summed to create a total score. The higher the score (maximum was 25, minimum was 5), the more the respondent perceived that teachers were involved in campus-level planning activities. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the extent to which differences were present among the four groups of respondents: principals at high performing schools; principals at low performing schools; teachers at high performing schools; and teachers at low performing schools. This analysis resulted in a statistically significant finding, $F(3, 283) = 25.245$, $p < .0001$. The effect size was large ($\eta^2 = .21$), indicating that group membership accounted for 21% of the variance in campus-level planning.

Scheffé post hocs revealed that both the principals at the high performing schools and the principals at the low performing schools perceived that teachers were substantially more involved in campus-level planning

activities than were perceived by either group of teachers. Neither group of principals nor the two groups of teachers differed from each other in their views of teacher involvement in campus-level planning. Descriptive statistics for these four groups of respondents can be seen in Table 1. Therefore, the position factor appears meaningful whereas the school rating does not appear meaningful.

Descriptive Statistics for Campus-Level Planning by Position and School Rating

School Rating and Position	n	M	SD
High Performing Principals	75	21.31	2.41
Low Performing Principals	62	21.11	3.09
High Performing Teachers	75	17.79	4.14
Low Performing Teachers	75	18.16	2.76

Table 1

4.2 Research Question Two

What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level budgeting?

Similar to the manner in which the first research question was addressed, the five survey items that comprised campus-level budgeting issues were summed to create a total score. The higher the score (maximum was 25, minimum was 5), the more the respondent perceived that teachers were involved in campus-level budgeting activities. An ANOVA was conducted to determine the extent to which differences were present among the four groups of respondents: principals at high performing schools; principals at low performing schools; teachers at high performing schools; and, teachers at low performing schools. This analysis resulted in a statistically significant finding, $F(3, 283) = 37.468$, $p < .0001$. The effect size was large ($\eta^2 = .28$), indicating that group membership accounted for 28% of the variance in campus-level budgeting.

Similar to the post hoc findings for the first research question dealing with campus-level planning issues, the Scheffé post hocs for this analysis revealed that both the principals at the high performing schools and the principals at the low performing schools perceived that teachers were substantially more involved in campus-level budgeting activities than were perceived by either group of teachers. Neither the two groups of principals nor the two groups of teachers differed from each other in their views of teacher involvement in campus-level budgeting. Descriptive statistics for respondents can be seen in Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics for Campus-Level Budgeting by Position and School Rating

School Rating and Position	n	M	SD
High Performing Principals	75	18.68	3.201
Low Performing Principals	62	18.35	2.516
High Performing Teachers	75	15.67	3.019
Low Performing Teachers	75	14.44	2.637

Table 2

4.3 Research Question Three

What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level curriculum?

Similar to the manner in which the first and second research questions were addressed, the five survey items that comprised campus-level curriculum issues were summed to create a total score. The higher the score (maximum was 25, minimum was 5), the more the respondent perceived that teachers were involved in campus-level curriculum activities. An ANOVA was conducted to determine the extent to which differences were present among the four groups of respondents. This analysis resulted in another statistically significant finding, $F(3, 283) = 23.260$, $p < .0001$. The effect size was large ($\eta^2 = .19$), indicating that group membership accounted for 19% of the variance in campus-level curriculum.

Similar to the post hoc findings for the first two research questions dealing with campus-level planning and budgeting issues, the Scheffé post hocs for this analysis revealed that both the principals at the high performing schools and the principals at the low performing schools perceived that teachers were substantially more involved in campus-level curriculum activities than were perceived by either group of teachers. The two groups of teachers did not differ from each other in their views of teacher involvement in campus-level curriculum. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics for Campus-Level Curriculum by Position and School Rating

School Rating and Position	n	M	SD
High Performing Principals	75	21.88	2.466
Low Performing Principals	62	21.18	2.344
High Performing Teachers	75	18.95	3.918
Low Performing Teachers	75	18.57	2.461

Table 3

4.4 Research Question Four

What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level staffing patterns?

Similar to the manner in which the previous three research questions were addressed, the five survey items that comprised campus-level staffing patterns were summed to create a total score. The higher the score (maximum was 25, minimum was 5), the more the respondent perceived that teachers were involved in campus-level staffing patterns. An ANOVA, conducted to determine the extent to which differences were present among the four groups of respondents, was statistically significant, $F(3, 283) = 41.34$, $p < .0001$. The effect size was large ($\eta^2 = .31$), reflecting that group membership accounted for 31% of the variance in campus-level staffing patterns.

Similar to the post hoc findings for the first three research questions dealing with campus-level planning, budgeting, and curriculum issues, the Scheffé post hocs for this analysis revealed that both the principals at the high performing schools and the principals at the low performing schools perceived that teachers were substantially more involved in campus-level staffing patterns than were perceived by either group of teachers. Interestingly, the teachers at the low performing schools perceived the least amount of involvement in staffing patterns. The two groups of principals did not differ from each other in their views of teacher involvement in campus-level staffing patterns. Descriptive statistics can be seen in Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics for Campus-Level Staffing Patterns by Position and School Rating

School Rating Position	n	M	SD
High Performing Principals	75	20.68	3.120
Low Performing Principals	62	20.06	2.925
High Performing Teachers	75	16.76	4.730
Low Performing Teachers	75	14.41	4.334

Table 4

4.5 Research Question Five

What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level staff development?

Similar to the manner in which the previous four research questions were addressed, the five survey items that comprised campus-level staff development were summed to create a total score. The higher the score (maximum was 25, minimum was 5), the more the respondent perceived that teachers were involved in campus-level staff development. An ANOVA, conducted to determine the extent to which differences were present among the four groups of respondents, resulted in statistical significance, $F(3, 283) = 46.606$, $p < .0001$. The effect size was large ($\eta^2 = .33$), reflecting that group membership accounted for 33% of the variance in campus-level staff development.

Similar to the post hoc findings for the first four research questions dealing with campus-level planning, budgeting, curriculum, and staffing patterns, the Scheffé post hocs for this analysis revealed that both the principals at the high performing schools and the principals at the low performing schools perceived that teachers were substantially more involved in campus-level staff development activities than were perceived by either group of teachers. The two groups of principals and the two groups of teachers did not differ from each other in their views of teacher involvement in campus-level staff development. Descriptive statistics are depicted in Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics for Campus-Level Staff Development by Position and School Rating

School Rating and Position	n	M	SD
High Performing Principals	75	21.45	2.882
Low Performing Principals	62	21.03	2.869
High Performing Teachers	75	17.09	4.548
Low Performing Teachers	75	15.57	3.789

Table 5

4.6 Research Question Six

What is the effect of school rating and position on perceived involvement in campus-level organization?

Similar to the manner in which the previous five research questions were addressed, the five survey items that comprised campus-level organization were summed to create a total score. The higher the score (maximum was 25, minimum was 5), the more the respondent perceived that teachers were involved in campus-level organization. An ANOVA, performed to determine the extent to which differences were present among the four groups of respondents, yielded another statistically significant finding, $F(3, 283) = 40.017$,

$p < .0001$. The effect size was again large ($\eta^2 = .30$), indicating that group membership accounted for 30% of the variance in campus-level staff development.

Similar to the post hoc findings for the first five research questions dealing with campus-level planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, and staff development, the Scheffé post hocs for this analysis revealed that both the principals at the high performing schools and the principals at the low performing schools perceived that teachers were substantially more involved in campus-level organization than were perceived by either group of teachers. The two groups of principals and the two groups of teachers did not differ from each other in their views of teacher involvement in campus-level organization. Descriptive statistics are depicted in Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics for Campus-Level Organization by Position and School Rating

School Rating and Position	n	M	SD
High Performing Principals	75	20.57	2.955
Low Performing Principals	62	21.19	2.579
High Performing Teachers	75	16.96	3.985
Low Performing Teachers	75	16.29	3.408

Table 6

Overall, there were significant differences in the means between the two principal groups and two teacher groups. In other words, the high performing principals and the low performing principals had no significant difference in means and the high performing teachers and low performing teachers had no significant difference between their means. However, both principal groups were significantly different than the two teacher groups. The findings were consistent for each area of analysis.

5 Discussion

In this study, we found that principals reported that teachers on their campuses were involved with campus-level planning. These findings correlated with the Texas Education Agency's (2002) *Resource Guide for Integrated District and Campus Planning andDecision-Making*. Texas statues specifically call for principals and teachers to establish a comprehensive needs assessment addressing student performance on academic excellence indicators. Our findings are congruent with Green (2001) who documented that this type of decision-making was in line with the school of thought presented by writers and researchers who stated that the learning environment of school needs to be refined.

Though our findings are supportive of the Texas Education Agency's (2002) *Resource Guide* which recommended a campus improvement plan that was mutually supportive to accomplish the identified objectives for improvement of student performance, principals and teachers perceive differing levels of that involvement. Teachers in the low performing schools and in the high performing schools did not perceive they were involved in the campus-level budgeting process with the majority of respondents selecting disagree or strongly disagree. This finding does not support a recommendation presented by the Texas Education Agency (2002) on budget development and decisions regarding the allocation of resources which should be determined at the campus level, based on local campus needs and priorities. The Texas Education Agency's *Resource Guide* recommends budgets should be coordinated with campus improvement plans that include parameters regarding the allocation of resources and the use of supplementary funds to which each campus is entitled based on student demographics (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

A statistically significant difference was also present between the principal and teacher groups regarding their perceptions of the campus-level curriculum involvement of their site-based decision-making committee. These data support that principals play a key role in determining the overall effectiveness of the school. Principals must allow their faculty meaningful roles in the area of curriculum and instruction to promote

effective teaching and learning (Glatthorn, 1997). The data revealed, however, that principals perceived significantly greater input by the site-based decision-making committee than did teachers.

Teachers at both level schools did not perceive that they were actively involved in the selection of personnel in the campus-level staffing pattern process. This finding supports a recommendation presented in a study by the Texas Association of School Boards (2004) Human Resource Services technical assistance document. The Texas Association of School Boards pointed out the site-based decision-making committees "only have a right to be involved in decisions about campus staffing patterns" (p. 5). An example of staffing patterns permits the site-based decision-making committee to choose to hire one special education or two special education aides, not the individuals themselves. Therefore, whereas some principals perceive teacher involvement in the personnel selection, that function goes beyond the recommended role of the site-based decision-making committee.

A statistically significant difference existed between the principal and teacher groups regarding their perceptions of the involvement of the site-based decision-making committee in the campus-level staffing pattern process. These data support the TASB (2004) study which stated the principal may involve committee members or any faculty members in the selection of personnel as he or she chooses. However, it is solely the principal's responsibility for the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) compliance.

Teachers reported that they were not actively involved in the selection of staff development on their campus. This finding is contrary to literature which indicates that campus-level staff development should be predominantly campus-based and related to achieving campus performance objectives (TEA, 2002). Making teachers partners in the decision-making process from the start creates a natural accountability that positively influences the implementation of the design and is essential to achieving successful classroom-level changes. Much of the literature also suggests that teachers need to continue developing their skills and learn all they can about their profession as well as learn new skills for working in an empowered environment (Goyne, Padgett, Rowicki, & Triplitt, 1999). The data from the current study only partially support these notions, with principals perceiving involvement, but teachers not perceiving such involvement.

Teachers perceived they were only minimally involved in campus-level organization on their campus. These data, particularly the principal data, support the writings of Goyne et al. (1999) who explained too often in the past that teachers have been excluded from the campus-level organizational decision-making process. These data support that, in the past, teachers have had limited contact with each other in their own buildings and have been underutilized sources of ideas and information to each other and the staff as a whole (Arterbury & Hord, 1991).

Findings from this study have implications for improving the site-based decision-making process at the individual school sites. Principals and teachers are encouraged to look at this study to review proper implementation. In addition, a thorough review of Texas Education Agency's *Resource Guide* (2002) may be beneficial to improve educational outcomes at school campuses in Texas.

The study has contributed an element of research that is unique as it specifically examined the perceptions of how principals and teachers employed at either high or at low performing schools perceived site-based decision-making on their respective campuses. Principals and teachers clearly disagreed on the extent of teacher involvement in site-based decision-making practices. Although Texas adopted their version of site-based management through the enactment of Senate Bill I in 1990, after all these years a disconnect still exists in this process between principals and teachers. It appears to these researchers that principals and teachers may not be sufficiently prepared to participate in the SBDM process. This lack of preparedness, we believe, may be due to inadequate training on the guidelines presented by the state, and their individual perceptions of involvement. Only when the perception of the each group is congruent, and there is adequate training will the SBDM process be successfully implemented.

These findings were obtained only from Texas schools and personnel. As such, readers are urged to be cautious in the extent to which they generalize these findings. Our reason in focusing on the State of Texas is that it is the second most populous state in the country. Moreover, school-related programs begun in Texas have been utilized in other states such as the accountability focus in the No Child Left Behind Act. Many of the accountability measures in this national act began in the State of Texas while President Bush was Governor. Researchers are encouraged to investigate the issue of site-based decision-making practices in

other states and at other school levels. Until such time as these findings can be replicated, readers are urged to be tentative in the conclusions they reach.

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