Teacher Influence in Site-Based Decision Making: A Descriptive Study

Keith Restine
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TEACHER INFLUENCE IN SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING:
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the
Department of Educational Leadership
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Educational Specialist

by
Keith A. Restine
June, 1992
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TEACHER INFLUENCE IN SITE-BASED DECISION MAKING:

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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Site-based decision making has been the focus of considerable research. However, the study of perceived teacher influence in schools utilizing site-based decision making has been neglected as applied to specific sites. Much of the research on participatory decision making has focused primarily on the effective group behaviors of decision making bodies, the structural components of programs, descriptive case studies of programs, or on general themes such as school restructuring. Much of the literature on decision making has been remiss in describing the process from a human orientation, as opposed to a product orientation.

This study examines the perception of teachers in a school with a decision making council. The focus of the study is on the perceived degree of teacher influence found in one school utilizing a site-based decision making council. The focus of this analysis was on the perceived degree of teacher influence in relation to the structural factors found at the school site.

This study employed the techniques of qualitative
methodology. Data were obtained through document review, observation, interview, and questionnaire. The concern was for insight into the perceived degree of influence from the viewpoint of individual perspectives which were examined. The subjects included members of a decision making council and the teachers represented by the council.

The data revealed two distinct structures which were influential in the perceived degree of teacher influence. These structures were referred to as formal and informal impact agents. Sub-groupings of the formal structure were referred to as historical and novel.

The formal structural variables are described as historical (hierarchical systems entrenched by tradition or role authority) and novel (hierarchical systems which impact the implementation phase of decisions). Informal structures are characterized as collegial and deal with traditional and nontraditional interaction patterns among school personnel.

A consistent theme was the belief that the novel structural system accommodated more teacher influence at the school site. Collegial interactions, which were observed and described, reflected this belief.

Data suggest that there are implications for focusing on the degree of influence perceived by teachers when introducing a system of governance involving site-based decision making.
CHAPTER I
Introduction

The publication of national reports concerned with the status of American education, which appeared in the 1980s, was accompanied by numerous proposals for reform. Research on the learning process and school effectiveness resulted in rational views of the teaching process and of school management (Murphy, Hallinger, & Mesa, 1985). Initial reform efforts attempted to apply bureaucratic mandates in order to raise standards and ensure accountability (Rowan, 1990; Furham, Clune, & Elmore, 1988). Considerable efforts have been targeted toward remediating perceived inadequacies in the educational system.

First wave reform initiatives recommended changes in the organizational structure of schools centered on issues often controlled by state departments of education, such as longer school days/years, certification standards, graduation standards, and staffing patterns. Few reports discussed in depth changes in the governance of schools. The literature generated by these reports led Louis (1986) and Landon & Shirer (1986) to conclude that the focus of the change process was misdirected and should be redirected at the local school site.

Largely as a result of the failure of first wave reform efforts, a new generation of reform efforts emerged. The realization that change cannot successfully be mandated from
the legislative arena began to appear. Magnet schools, collaborative schools, school-based management proposals, decentralization plans, and recommendations suggesting expanded leadership roles and the redistribution of responsibilities, authority, and resources are examples of strategies that were advanced to address this concern (MacPhail-Wilcox and King, 1988).

Literature in business and industry supports the value of team building, participatory decision making, and site-based management. The critical element of constituent involvement is essential for the success of endeavors of this type. Numerous school systems have experimented, with varying degrees of success, in the realm of participatory decision making. The research on restructured schools suggests a flatter hierarchical structure of schools which facilitates decision making at decentralized locations (Tucker, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1987). This system relies on teacher knowledge and experience, rather than an elaborate system of controls, to improve teaching.

One statewide initiative of this type was instituted in Kentucky. This initiative was the court’s response to a class action suit filed by the Council for Better Education, a non-profit organization representing sixty-six school districts. The suit challenged the equity of funding for education. Judge Ray Corns issued a judgement in October, 1988, stating that the funding system was inefficient and
discriminatory. On appeal, the Kentucky Supreme Court issued an opinion that declared the entire state school system in Kentucky unconstitutional. Furthermore, the court ordered the Kentucky General Assembly to create a new system of common schools in Kentucky. The outcome of this mandate was the creation of House Bill 940, which was approved by the General Assembly and signed into law on April 11, 1990.

One dimension of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) required that all Kentucky school districts change the governance structure of local schools, specifically with regard to creating a school-based council to function as the policy making body for the school. The premises for this mandate include, but are not limited to: (1) redesigning the power and control structures in schools, (2) improving the nature of the school as a community of learners, (3) improving the problem solving and decision making processes, and, subsequently, (4) improving educational outcomes (KERA, 1990).

The Tuckasee School Council was one of the first councils established under KERA. This response to KERA made this site a particularly interesting and timely focus of study.

Statement of the Problem

This study was prompted by an interest in the redesign of school organizations which facilitate the establishment of networks, broaden the decision making base, and redesign
teacher roles to promote collaboration. The focus of the study was on the individual teachers and school council members at Tuckasee Elementary School.

The purpose of the study was to examine, describe and explain the processes employed in decision making and problem solving by one selected school based decision making council in order to broaden the understanding of the perceived degree of teacher influence at sites utilizing site-based decision making. As such, the study examined channels of input, issues which were generated, group processes which were revealed, and the perceived degree of influence of teachers at the site.

**Design and Procedure**

This study utilized a case study approach (Merriam, 1988) as the primary methodological tool in describing and explaining the perceived degree of teacher influence. Primary data collection techniques included document review, participant observation, interview, and questionnaire. Data were collected from twenty-five personnel in one rural school site over a period of eight months during September, 1991 through April, 1992.

**Conceptual Framework**

Qualitative methods allowed a fuller understanding of the processes involved in decision making. The conceptual framework which was utilized to examine the perceived degree
of teacher influence in decision making, suggests two major areas where perceived teacher influence varies. These are termed formal and informal impact agents. Formal impact agents include structural variables which were classified as historical or novel. Informal impact agents were used in reference to interaction patterns that allowed teachers to provide input and feedback.

Limitations

This study is limited to the study of one selected school site and the individuals of that site over an eight month period. Other sites and time frames might yield alternative findings.

Although fundamental steps were taken to insure the reliability and validity of the study, limitations exist due to the nature of the researcher's position as a professional educator at the research site.
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The concept of processes by which teachers systematically assume greater responsibility for their professional work life is generated from research in the areas of participatory decision making and professional autonomy. Participatory decision making entails some type of group function. This section provides a review of the literature on: (a) participatory decision making, and (b) group process. The section regarding participatory decision making focuses on the rationale for the school-based decision making as it applies to teacher influence. The section on group processes explores group development and the relationship of groups to issues of power, influence, and authority.

Participatory Decision-Making

Many of the reform efforts reference some form of increased school autonomy (David, 1989). Often the method to achieve this autonomy is reflected in some type of shared decision making model between the administrative and teaching staff. The relationship between the adoption of site based decision making and teacher/school autonomy is critical when considering the reason for the increased interest in this form of governance.

The genesis of the participatory decision making
movement began as a reaction to court-ordered desegregation in the mid-1970s (Frymier, 1987; David, 1989). Desegregation increased bureaucratic controls over local districts and centralization. The militancy of teacher unions brought elaborate negotiated contracts that served to increase centralization (Frymier, 1987).

School districts were pushed by federal and state mandates, negotiated agreements, and heightened tensions to assume greater authority in the management of schools. The bureaucratic structure of schools allowed greater coordination of the many facets of schools and served as justification for the way schools operated. However, bureaucracy has limitations when applied to the individual school site. As Duttweiler (1988) suggests, "The bureaucratic structure of school systems, rather than helping, stands in the way of improvement at the school level, making the needs of the system more important than the needs of people" (p. 65). Further, McWalters (1992) states, "a system of centralized authority and decision-making discourages innovation at the building level" (p. 9).

As opportunities disappeared for teachers to exercise influence and power at the work site and the sense of ownership declined, a growing sense of frustration appeared (Frymier, 1987). Teachers began to feel that they were treated as interchangeable pieces of a complex machine over which they had no control.
Districts, experiencing many of the same emotions as teachers, such as loss of control and autonomy, developed proposals to consolidate their power base. Common responses were to implement decentralization models that lessened state and federal controls but did little to change the bureaucratic structure or teacher attitudes at the local level. School-site budgeting was implemented to control expenditures and to provide a degree of autonomy from governmental mandates (David, 1989).

School-based decision making in the 1980s was driven by the realization that the educational system was not working. The problems faced by the public schools were similar to the problems faced by business—lack of productivity and lack of attainment of bureaucratic goals. American business was forced to adopt less hierarchical organizational formats resulting from success of foreign business in the domestic market. Levine (1986) suggests that companies of this type allow for autonomy and entrepreneurship through a decentralized structure while maintaining a strong commitment to vision through the establishment of important cultural values.

According to Peters and Waterman (1982), American businesses that are the most effectively managed are also the ones which possess an aversion to bureaucracy. As such, organizational goals should seek to reduce centralization
while encouraging innovations to begin at the individual level and work their way up through the organization.

Just as the worker in American business was frustrated, evidence suggests that strong central control diminishes teacher morale and level of effort (David, 1989). Frymier (1987) theorized that the bureaucratic structure of schools is more influential in the determination of teacher behavior than are personal abilities, training, and experience. Research concerned with teacher satisfaction issues began to appear which documented the growing disenchantment among teachers regarding their professional life. School-based decision making was seen as a means to bring about change in educational practices through the empowerment of staff and the creation of conditions that facilitate local innovation and professional growth (David, 1989). "The assumption was that expanding involvement at the school would lead to ownership and higher quality decisions regarding school improvement" (Robinson & Barkley, 1992, p. 14).

Lortie (1975), in his classic sociological study, *Schoolteacher*, documented this phenomena well in advance of the trend toward the study of satisfaction issues. Lortie (1975) discovered that teachers experienced little control over their work environment and over the decisions that affect their professional life. Satisfaction tended to be oriented toward intrinsic issues rather than extrinsic or external rewards.
McLaughlin, Pferfer, Swanson-Owens, and Yee (1986) discovered that working conditions contributed to the loss of self-worth among teachers. Two areas stated as critical to this finding were the lack of teacher input into decisions that affected work life and administrative decisions that undermined teacher expertise and professional judgment. Mohrman, Cooke, and Mohrman (1978) found that teacher satisfaction was not only related to the degree of participation but also to the types of decisions in which teachers were allowed to participate. Teachers, in this sample, desired participation in decisions that directly affected the teaching/learning process but this was the area where teachers were observed experiencing the least amount of success.

In sharply hierarchical organizations the employees feel unappreciated and unrespected (Stinson and Appelbaum, 1988). People who perceive they are viewed negatively tend not to work hard and energies are focused on self-protection rather than self-improvement (Frymier, 1987). Teachers see the lack of involvement in decision making as a signal that they lack importance and value (McLaughlin, et al. 1986).

Erlandson and Bifano (1987) shared the view that the "considerable amount of research and informed opinion on shared decision making in schools builds a strong case that
a more professional, autonomous role for teachers could enhance the effectiveness of public schools" (p. 33).

Goodlad (1984), in the classic work *A Place Called School*, suggested that "... the school must be largely self-directing. The people within it must develop a capacity for effecting renewal and establishing the mechanisms for doing this" (p. 276).

Parkey and Damico (1989) theorized that much of the failed school improvement efforts are due to two factors: (a) a lack of faculty input and control resulting in school improvement programs whose goals are in opposition with the faculty's beliefs and intent, and (b) the absence of an approach that is sensitive to the political, social, and economic forces of the surrounding environment.

The rationale for school-based decision making is centered on three primary assumptions: (a) the school is the primary decision making unit, (b) decisions should be made at the lowest hierarchical level, and (c) change requires ownership and ownership comes from the opportunity to participate in meaningful discussion of the change process (David, 1989). Advocates of site-based decision making have cited many benefits including: (a) the creation of new sources of leadership, (b) the establishment of school accountability, and (c) the alignment of budgetary and instructional priorities (Peterson, 1991). Additionally, White (1989) suggested that shared decision making improves
staff attitudes, morale and communication. School-based decision making encompasses a variety of practices. All indicate some choice in staffing, discretionary budget, methods for teacher involvement, annual performance reports, and roles of parents.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) mandated the following: (a) after July 13, 1990 any school in Kentucky could decide to implement site based decision making by a successful vote by two-thirds of the faculty, (b) by June 30, 1991 each local school board would submit to the chief state school officer the name of at least one school in the district to implement site-based decision making for the following year, (c) by January 1, 1996 each local school board would adopt a policy describing how the local district policies have been amended to facilitate site based decision making, and (d) all Kentucky schools would implement site-based decision making by July 1, 1996 (Weston, 1991).

This law, the most comprehensive of its kind regarding site-based decision making, details the composition of councils, the responsibilities of councils, and the responsibility of local boards toward councils. Pertinent points include:

1. Councils shall be composed of two parents, three teachers, and the principal or administrator;
2. Teacher representatives shall be elected for one year terms by a majority of the teachers;

3. Parent representatives shall be elected for one year terms by the parent teacher organization;

4. The principal shall chair the school council;

5. The council shall have the responsibility to set policy to provide an environment to enhance student achievement and meet the goals of KERA;

6. All certified staff may participate in school based decision making through committees established by the council;

7. All meetings of the council and the committees are subject to the open meetings act;

8. The council shall determine, subject to available funds, the number of persons to be employed within each job classification at school;

9. The council shall determine which instructional materials and student support services are to be provided at the school;

10. The principal shall select personnel to fill vacancies after consultation with the council;

11. If the position to be filled is that of the principal, the council shall select the principal from a list of applicants supplied by the superintendent;

12. The council shall adopt policy in the following areas:
a. determination of curriculum, including needs assessment, curriculum development, curriculum alignment with state standards, and technology utilization;

b. assignment of all instructional/non-instructional staff;

c. assignment of students to classes and programs;

d. determination of school schedule;

e. determination of school space;

f. planning and resolution of issues regarding instructional practices;

g. implementation of discipline and classroom management practices; and

h. selection of extracurricular programs, including requirements and evaluation.

13. The policy adopted by the local school board to implement school based decision making shall include:

a. school budget and administration;

b. assessment of individual student progress;

c. school improvement plans;

d. professional development plans;

e. parent, citizen, and community participation;

f. requirements for waiver of district policies;

g. requirements for record keeping; and

h. a process for appeal of council decisions.

(Weston, 1991)
Group Process

The literature on group process has much of its roots in sociological theory. Understanding of the small group is important when attempting to understand the whole of society. Shepherd (1964) theorized that the small group is a source of values, serves to shape conforming attributes, a source of initial roles, and serves a mediating function between the individual and society.

According to Zander (1982), "a group is a collection or set of individuals who interact and depend on one another" (p. 1). A group emerges from individuals when the individuals feel free to communicate openly, are interested in the success of the group as a whole, feel that the other members of the group are helpful, attempt to assist colleagues, speak of the group as "we", and engage in participation when members gather (Zander, 1982). Miles (1981) defined the group as "...several persons working in a face-to-face setting on a task that requires their cooperation" (p. 3). Both definitions stressed some aspect of cooperation and/or collaboration as determinates in the formation of groups. It should be stressed that cooperation and collaboration are two separate and distinct processes that yield distinctly different outcomes.

Groups are valuable because they serve a variety of functions and meet individual, group, and organizational
needs in a variety of ways. Groups serve the following purposes:

1. encourage meaningful interaction among members,
2. facilitate the learning of problem-solving methods,
3. facilitate the development of commitments for both the group and the decisions of the group,
4. allow a forum for the understanding of the impact of communication, and
5. allow members to develop awareness of others.

(Rosenfeld, 1973)

Much of the research on groups is framed with reference to phases in group development. Although the labels and descriptors vary, there appeared to be distinct phases that individuals as members of groups must work through before becoming part of the collective whole. As an illustration, Bradford and Cohen (1984), according to Ethridge and Hall (1991), identified five phases of group development:

1. Membership: group members seek their place in the group and decide the quality of their individual investment in the group;
2. Subgrouping: group members seek others who share similar viewpoints;
3. Confrontation: increased frustration over the inability to discuss issues drives members to confront;
4. Differentiation: subgroup allegiance is loosened as members respond to issues;

5. Shared responsibility: members value individuality and collective effort as they focus on issues.

Other issues that all groups face include the pressures that group influence brings for conformity, the roles that individuals in groups assume, communication patterns, attraction networks, conflict, and leadership (Rosenfeld, 1973).

Groups must be able to communicate effectively if they are to understand goals, solve problems, make effective decisions, and implement action plans. Multiple types of communication are required to allow groups to function effectively.

Unilateral communication, initiated by the sender and terminated at the receiver, occurs in many groups. In directive communication the exchange is complete when the receiver indicates to the sender that the message has been received and understood. An identifying feature of this type of communication is that the sender directs while the receiver complies, possibly indicating some type of coercion. Transactional communication is a reciprocal process in which each participant sends and receives messages while attempting to understand the other message. Information travels both ways and each message impacts the transaction (Schmuck and Runkel, 1985). Features of
effective interpersonal communication, which are crucial for the success of the group consist of openness, emotional communication, the awareness of other's needs and strengths, and trust. These involve some degree of risk in contributing to the group effort and understanding (Schmuck & Runkel, 1985).

Stinson and Appelbaum (1988) believed that sharing of power by all constituents of a school encourages individuals to become involved in decision making without feeling manipulated. The benefits of this type of participation are increased commitment to the organization and greater self-respect. In the case of school-based decision making, the decision making groups influence teachers by involving them and, thus, by sharing power.

Any discussion of this type must include a discussion of power. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) define power as "influence potential--the resource that enables a leader to gain compliance or commitment from others" (p. 202). Power is difficult to define and is often used interchangeably with the terms authority and influence. For the purpose of this study, the definitions developed by Hampton, Summer, & Webber (1988) are used. Power is an attribute that allows one to influence. Influence is a process whereby one individual follows another's advice, suggestion, or directive. Authority is granted by higher organizational levels to exercise power.
Bredeson (1989) discussed three types of power—positional, personal, and political. Positional power is grounded in formal position or role. Authority or control over rewards, resources, sanctions, information, and environment characterize this power type. Personal power is based on individual expertise or charisma. Political power is characterized as control over decision processes, coalition building, and institutional of the power base.

Representative power, one type of power, comes from the groups decision to delegate authority to others in representing their interests at higher levels within the organization (Hampton, Summer, & Webber, 1988). This type of power is described as the influence network within schools. Representative groups such as teacher committees and school councils, attempt to influence superiors and, if successful, gain influence ability with the group that they represent (Hampton, Summer, & Webber, 1988).

In such a relationship, influence is said to be reciprocal. A power gain is noted by both the representatives and by those represented. The greater the total power possessed by all, the greater the influence potential (Hampton, Summer, & Webber, 1988).

The move to site-based decision making would include readjustment/refinement of all power relationships. Readjustment could be upward (influence over superordinates), downward (influence over subordinates), and
lateral (influence over parallel position colleagues). The perception of the power that others possess is far more important than the actual power possessed. Many view the concept of power through personal experience and base their perceptions on that experience. Thus, it is "the perception that others have of those power bases that is crucial" (Hersey and Blanchard, 1989, p. 219).

Leadership styles also require readjustment. For the sake of clarity, consideration is given to two dichotomous styles of leadership. Traditional leadership is characterized by the power to direct, instruct, and control. Group-centered leadership, in contrast, is characterized by sensitivity to group maintenance functions. Sensitivity to the feelings and needs of individuals in the group is balanced with group goals, feelings, and needs. Responsibility for group effectiveness is vested in the group and not the one individual seen as the leader (Bredeson, 1989).

Yukl (1989), according to Bredeson (1989), lists six group centered behaviors. The leader:

1. views the group as a collective entity while listening attentively and observing nonverbal cues regarding member needs, feelings, interactions;

2. serves as a consultant and facilitator, not as a director;
3. models appropriate leadership behaviors and encourages the group to learn to perform the behaviors;
4. nurtures a climate supportive of the expression of feelings as well as ideas;
5. encourages the group to deal with maintenance needs in regular meetings; and
6. relinquishes control to the group and allows the group to make decisions on all appropriate matters.

The principal must be aware of the changing face of school leadership for successful implementation of site-based decision making to occur. David (1989) believed that the principal is responsible for the degree to which school-level authority is shared. Principals, as educational leaders, must realize that leadership is the process of influencing others to commit to personal and organizational goals. The varied demands of the principalship often cannot be handled effectively by one role position. "In order to insure that the process works, principals and teachers must develop a collaborative and collegial professional partnership in the leadership of schools" (Duttweiler, 1988, p. 112).

This type of principal realizes that flexibility exists within the bureaucratic organizational structure. They also acknowledge that traditional bureaucratic controls and sanctions and/or bureaucratic linkages are not designed for coordination. These leaders attend to the creation and/or
maintenance of cultural linkages to forge the necessary connections. They understand that the function of a leader is to create connections based on a common culture rather than to link people and roles through management design (Blase, 1987).

Schools function as groups, with various sub-groups identified under the term--school. Therefore, a more thorough understanding of how groups function can enhance one's understanding of schools.

A summary of the literature on participatory decision-making and group processes reveals that the genesis and evolution of site based decision making resulted from frustration with perceived lack of ownership and diminished opportunities for constituents of schools to influence the conduct of schools. Further, descriptions of the work life of teachers revealed that the lack of teacher participation in decisions that directly affect that work life undermined teacher expertise and professional judgment.

The literature on group process suggests that those who occupy positions of leadership in schools must be keenly aware of the critical nature of cooperation and collaboration in establishing conditions that foster group decision making. Site based decision-making, thus, requires refinement and readjustment in the nature of power, authority, and influence relationships.
Background and Setting

Tuckasee Elementary School is located in a rural section in Kentucky. Although part of a larger county school system, the building itself lies approximately 16 miles from the nearest community and is somewhat geographically isolated. The building, the result of the consolidation of two small schoolhouses, once housed the high school (7-12) for the surrounding area. With renovation and the loss of student population, it became a (1-12) school. With the creation of a central high school it became a 1-8 school and currently houses grades K-8.

The student population is composed of approximately 400 students. Current staff includes 1 principal, 25 full time teachers, 4 itinerant teachers, and 6 teaching assistants. No evidence of ethnic diversity could be found in student composition or staff composition.

Prior to the creation of a site-based council, the staff had been embroiled in a bitter battle with the superintendent over the removal of a previous principal. A staff member, with 16 years experience at the site had assumed the principalship the previous summer and resigned, under duress, that summer. Staff support for the embattled principal was widespread.
This was the third change in school leadership within the span of 11 years. Initially, a teacher member committee was created to support the principal. The provision of the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA), dealing with site-based decision making, was viewed as a way for the school to create a decision making body based on the law instead of a reactionary response to a situation. The staff viewed the council as a means of gaining control of the school’s destiny. Three days after the official beginning date for the creation of school councils, the staff met and voted to go site-based. Official elections soon followed to make the process complete, as dictated by law.

Data Collection Procedures

This study utilized the case study technique as the primary methodological tool in describing and explaining one selected school based decision making council. Primary data collection techniques included document review, participant observation, interview, and questionnaire. Data were collected from twenty-five personnel and participants were observed in activities at the site from September, 1991 through April, 1992. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of subjects.

Observation notes were recorded during, or immediately after, observations. The notes were expanded and details added soon after observations and during the transcription process. Observation allowed the researcher to interpret
interview data and provided a more thorough understanding of site-based decision making in action. Observations were recorded during school council meetings and during the daily routine when issues related to this research arose.

Documents reviewed included: (1) council by-laws, (2) council agendas and minutes, (3) correspondence between the council and the superintendent/school board, the State Department of Education and the council, and (4) the council’s school improvement plan.

A random sample of teachers and all current council members were interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured and informal (Appendix A). Interviews were conducted at the subject’s convenience and choice of location, and varied in length from forty-five minutes to two hours. All of the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim (Appendix B). Figure 1 displays the topic areas, interview questions related to the topic area and sources of reference.

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Insert Figure 1 About Here

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A survey instrument was used to gather information from all staff, including teachers not included in the interview phase (Appendix C). This study sought clarification and validity through the use of perception checks with teachers and council members and triangulation of methods.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question Numbers</th>
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<td>Schmuck &amp; Runkel (1985); Hersey &amp; Blanchard (1988); Miles (1981)</td>
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<td>Decision Input</td>
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<td>Parkey &amp; Damico (1989); Mohrman, Cooke &amp; Mohrman (1978); Levine (1986)</td>
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<td>Empowerment</td>
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<td>Weston (1991); Bredeson (1989); Duttweiler (1988); Erlandson &amp; Bifano (1987)</td>
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<td>Weston (1991); White (1989); Zander (1982); Rosenholtz (1987)</td>
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<td>Group Cohesion</td>
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<td>White (1989); Zander (1982); Shepherd (1964)</td>
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<td>Autonomy</td>
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<td>David (1989); Duttweiler (1988); Erlandson &amp; Bifano (1987)</td>
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<td>Teacher Morale</td>
<td>2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14</td>
<td>Frymier (1987); David (1989); Lortie (1975); Stinson &amp; Appelbaum (1988)</td>
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<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14</td>
<td>David (1989); Robinson &amp; Barkley (1992); McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens, &amp; Yee (1986)</td>
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</table>

**Figure 1.** Interview questions related to literature review.
The survey instrument was designed to collect data on the perceived degree of teacher influence. The categories targeted by the instrument were: (a) actual and preferred decision making formats, (b) actual and preferred amounts of hierarchial influence, and (c) influence structures and networks. The survey instrument was developed after an analysis of the interviews. The instrument reflected a concern for exploring discrepancies between reality (what is) and preference (what could be). The instrument was used to provide a focus for further understanding of perceived degree of influence.

The participants in this study included twenty-five subjects. Twenty-four staff members responded to the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with twelve teachers (two of whom were former council members and three were current council members), two parent council members, and the building level administrator. The teachers were professional educators with more than three years of teaching experience. The parent members of the school council were on the council for the second year, having been re-elected in the fall. The administrator was new to the school site and had one year of administrative experience prior to this appointment.
CHAPTER IV

Findings and Data Analysis

The amount of influence that teachers believe that they possess over issues that arise in schools is important when considering any change which could affect these issues. Two general themes emerged from the data concerning areas that impact perceptions of teacher influence. The amount of influence that teachers believe they possess varies depending on the area to which the anticipated influence is directed. For the purposes herein, these structures of influence are referred to as formal and include traditional hierarchical levels of authority (school board) and nontraditional levels of authority (the school council). The collegial structure of schools was referred to as the informal structure.

Analysis of the Data

The analysis of the data involves a discussion of general themes relating to the degree of teacher perceived influence that emerged throughout the course of the study. These themes will be discussed in general, descriptive terms to accommodate the chosen research methodology. The descriptors described in the conceptual framework will be used for clarity.
Formal Impact Agents

Teachers' Point of View

Teachers perceive themselves as powerless when confronted by formal authority institutions, firmly entrenched by tradition and local norms. In the case of the teachers at Tuckasee Elementary School, the institution that most contributed to this sense of powerlessness was the local school board. Teachers believed that the limits of what they could do, individually or collectively, were determined by the responses of the board.

They [the council] have met with some roadblocks along the way. So much time has been spent trying to clarify sections of the law and finding out what the board would let them do. (E.F., 3/92)

...

...that's another thing that I feel is our decision to make. It's not theirs [the board], this is our school. (N.B., 3/92)

...

I think there could have been more change if there had not been so much opposition from the board. It's more or less like we have the authority that they are willing to delegate to us, instead of having the authority that we thought the council should have. (M.X., 3/92)
The degree of influence that individual teachers believed that they possessed was minimal when discussing this formal structure. The history and tradition of board control was so internalized that teachers did not see any change in school/board relations. The relationship was perceived as an adversarial relationship, with teachers viewing themselves and the students as the losers of most confrontations.

I just don't understand why the board will deliberately do the things that they do. I guess we have taken it for so long that they think they can get away with it. All this decision does is hurt the kids. (C.M., 1/92)

The teachers were adamant in the belief that the school was being deliberately blocked by the school board when seeking resolution to some issues of interest to the school site. The issue mentioned most frequently concerned the relocation of the teachers' parking lot. This issue appeared to give validation to the teachers' belief that the board would block any attempt by the school toward self-rule.

A brief summary of the situation might be helpful to better understand the situation. For a number of years, teachers had been parking in a church parking lot adjacent to the school. The superintendent, under pressure from a board member, informed the principal that teachers could no longer park at the church and that a new parking lot would be built on school property. The council developed a
proposal to move the parking lot to the front of the school, rather than having it placed in the rear of the school. The rationale for the council's position included: (a) student safety, (b) a reduction in traffic flow at the rear of the building, (c) decreased liability to the school system, (d) increased space for the P.E. department, and (e) increased parking areas for special events.

The proposal met with rejection by the board. The parking lot was built on the back play area. Teachers resented the board's position and some continued to park at the church, in opposition to the superintendent's directive. The church made a formal motion to bar teacher parking due to liability factors. Pressure was placed on the teachers, by the administration, to park in the designated teacher's parking lot.

Upon reflection, teachers indicated that the council did everything that it could to solve the dispute with the board. In most cases, the blame for the entire incident is placed on the board and directed away from the council.

...I just hate parking back there. It's a pain...and I feel like the council did a real good job with that. I feel they worked hard at it and spent a lot of time so I don't blame any of that on them. I feel like most of it is just out of their control and they can't do anything about it at this point. (E.X., 3/92)
...it's like everything we've been through with parking. They have heard our side of the story. They [the council] just can't do very much about it. (E.X., 3/92)

The system had a history of using bureaucratically oriented methods, according to the teachers. Teachers believed that district decisions were made with little or no building level input. The teachers expressed strong sentiment that this was a frequently occurring problem and not an isolated event.

...it's always been that way. I've been in the county for years and it's always been that way. I can't count the number of times that the board has done something like this. They just don't care what we think! (B.O., 2/92)

...The way it was before the board didn't want to hear you and if they did, they didn't care because you didn't matter. (E.X., 3/92)

Another formal impact agent that was identified was the school council. Formally created by law in 1990, the council was designed to allow parents, teachers and administrators at each Kentucky school site the control to decide how that site could best meet the mandates of KERA. Teachers perceived the council as a potentially powerful format for change within the school site. Although teachers
disagreed as to the actual effectiveness of council operation in regard to change, they were consistent in the belief that the potential existed under this format for change to occur.

The council was viewed as an intermediary between the teachers and the school board. Teachers credited the council with an improvement in the working relationship between the teachers and the school board. Although the council did not function in concert with the school board on many issues, teachers identified the council as influential in the improvement of school/board relations.

I also think that having parents on this council has helped us with the school board and central office. So many times we teachers are made out to be the bad guys, like we are always whining and made out like we just want to get a paycheck...so far, I think that we have had a lot of empathy from the two parents. (T.I., 3/92)

The council was viewed as more accessible than the formal-historical structure. In general, the faculty believed that the council provided them with an avenue for input that had not existed in the past. Teachers expressed satisfaction with the fact that, for the first time in their careers, decisions were being made by the people who were responsible for the implementation of the decisions.
For once, teachers have a way to have input. In the past, no one really cared one way or the other. (E.F., 3/92)

... I think we all feel, even though we are not directly involved...like we do have a bit of a say, more so than we used to. There are some things now that I feel we can make some decisions about... (N.B., 3/92)

... Yeah, now I feel that I have more input than what I had when it was total administration...when the board had total power. I definitely feel like we have more input now. (E.X., 3/92)

... For once, there are people who are at school and know what a school is like that are making decisions. Since they teach here they know what is going on. They know the school committee areas and know the areas of greatest concern to the teachers. (E.F., 3/92)

The teachers expressed the belief that the council had been influential in obtaining several new programs at the school. Additionally, teachers gave the council complete credit for working with the board to obtain the programs. Teachers listed four programs in particular: (1) the Writing-to-Read lab, (2) the alternative learning classroom, (3) the extended day Kindergarten building, and (4) the math
resource center. Other accomplishments mentioned included a salad bar for teachers, a comprehensive school-wide discipline policy, the hiring of the new principal, and more equitable teacher schedules.

Teachers realized that the council was open to their input, but expressed frustration with the input mechanisms utilized by the council. A frequently voiced concern was the lack of communication between the council and the teachers.

I think if we are going to function as a school with a site-based council we are going to have to reach out more to the faculty and pull them in. (B.O., 3/92)

Teachers wanted to know what issues were important to the council but felt that the council was not doing an adequate job with involving the teachers in this aspect of decision making. Teachers, as a group, believed that communication was informal regarding council matters. Most conversation regarding council events occurred during the school day and occurred by happenstance. Teachers would discuss council concerns if it was convenient and if they were in proximity to a council member. Controversial issues were discussed more frequently and the teachers were more likely to be the initiator of such conversation.

It is informally done with who I see or feel comfortable with...I take my children downstairs and I pass C.'s room so that's easy to talk to C...I've known
D.C. for years so that makes it easy and I do see her in other areas of life...that makes it easier. (K.T., 3/92)

...after lunch we take a break outside and one of the council members is out there with me so that’s just casual conversation. I talk about what is coming up or what has been brought up. (E.X., 3/92)

Teachers were quick to point out that they believed they were sufficiently informed after council meetings. Copies of the minutes were distributed and teachers felt they understood what had been discussed. Some concern was expressed regarding seeking input prior to the meetings. I have not had any council member come to me specifically and ask my opinion about a particular situation...beforehand, I haven’t been asked specifically how I feel about certain issues. (B.O., 3/92)

...No, I don’t feel directly involved. It may be that I am not supposed to be directly involved and if not, that’s fine...but it is still not what I thought it should be or was gonna [sic] be...I think we should all have a say. We elect those people to represent us,
which is exactly what they are doing, but I still think there comes a time when we should have a say. (N.B., 3/92)

The suggestion box was mentioned frequently as the primary source of input for teachers under this system. Teachers accepted that concerns could be expressed and that the council would take them into consideration. The move to a smoke-free school began as a suggestion found in the suggestion box. Teachers appeared satisfied with the council’s addition of this input mechanism.

We control a lot of it [the agenda] by the suggestion box. I feel like when I put something in the suggestion box that it will be on the agenda...I know the things that I put in the suggestion box have been dealt with. I think it’s been our way to voice our issues. (E.F., 3/92)

Teachers expressed some reservation concerning the council’s use of teacher committees. The former council had used committees to seek the input of the entire staff and teachers seemed to view this as the function of committees. Teachers questioned the advisability of not continuing that system. For the majority of the year, little committee work was observed at the school. One committee was created, by the principal, to work on the school budget. The principal, near the end of the school year, began asking for volunteers to serve on the committees created under the former council.
I think all the committees are good. There’s input from all the people on particular committees...I think the committees need to be active. (B.O., 3/92)

Teachers who had access to a council member felt that they were more influential in the decision making process. Accessibility was determined by teaching schedules, carpool arrangements, room assignments, duty assignments, and personal friendships. Teachers who did not share any of these factors did not see themselves as influential in the decision making process as others.

It’s like some of the things were too hush-hush to talk about in the open. They were just talked about behind the scenes and within their group...and within this group...never together. (N.B., 3/92)

... If I didn’t have time outside with a council member then I don’t feel like I would be very informed at all. (E.X., 3/92)

... I think there has been more input. Now it may have been from a selected few, but I think those few and those who have been interested enough to find out have been more informed. (B.O., 3/92)

Teachers believed that the council system allowed them to exert more influence at the worksite, but influence was limited to some individuals rather than the entire teaching
staff. The feeling was that this was not a deliberate oversight, but a condition brought about by the newness of the system. Teachers expressed the desire for more opportunity to provide input into the decision making process.

Teachers viewed the council as a school advocate rather than as a teacher advocate. The staff was quick to point out that part of the fault could lie with them. They felt that they lacked ownership in the dilemma and were not participating in the process as fully as they might. The uncertainty of a new system and the demands for their limited time seemed to contribute to this feeling.

Teacher Council Members’ Point of View

Members of the school council identified the local school board in discussing the formal structures that existed in the system. The board was viewed as accepting or rejecting the proposals developed at the school site. The formal system, as guaranteed by law, was the center of much frustration and conflict between the council and the board.

The council members’ viewpoint concerning the role of the board in council/board relations centered on the belief that the board was undermining the mission of the council and the school. All council members believed that the board had blocked the amount of influence that the council had over some decisions at the school. Frustration and betrayal
came across as emotional issues that were felt by the council, both as individuals and as members of a group.

Again, the handling of the parking issue by the board was a frequently mentioned item. Council members were frustrated by the outcome of the issue and by the process itself. The tremendous amount of time investment and effort was balanced against the frustration of some outcomes.

The parking issue has been my big issue...Having parked out there and knowing that when my husband came to High School here...everybody parked out there and they have for forty years...thirty some years. And that was an issue with me because of the reason behind it. If it had been approached directly...it was sorta [sic] a sly way of doing what they (the board) did. (D.C., 3/92)

... I don't think the teachers were given any consideration and I don't think the parking lot is in the correct place. I think it has become a safety hazard or whatever you want to call it. It's unsafe for our children where they put it. (D.C., 3/92)

Council members felt blocked when working with the board on issues affecting the school. A common theme dealt with the allocation of power by the board. Power, at least in the council members' eyes, was controlled by the board. The opinion was that the board felt threatened by teachers who would come to board meetings and make their feelings
known. Members also related the feeling that the year was one of power struggles between the council and the board. Before [at board meetings]...they had totally ignored us. They wouldn’t even look up at [a council member]. He finally had to stand there and wait for them. (Z.O., 3/92)

... We don’t have the power! We are having to fight to prove that we do have power. You know, they say the new word for KERA is power. Well, phooey...we got to prove it first. You have to prove it to the board and everybody. And, you know, you are having to go through Frankfort [State Department of Education] to do this. It’s making it hard...it could go on record that Tuckasee’s council has really fought for it [power]. (D.C., 3/92)

The school council sought outside assistance in two cases that dealt with the school board. The issue that developed as a result of the parking dispute involved the determination of the use of school space. The council believed that the law had given school councils the right to determine the effective use of school space.

Correspondence between the council and the state department on this issue showed the state department making no definitive statement on this case. Council members expressed the opinion that the state was using legal jargon
to escape the responsibility of making a binding decision in this case.

In the opinion of the state attorney general’s office, KERA did allow councils to set policy to determine the use of school space unless the board "which has ultimate responsibility for the management of school property and has control and management responsibility for the school funds" has a policy relating to the use of all school property that would supersede the council’s authority (KRS 160.290 (1)).

Correspondence between the council and the Kentucky Department of Education Division of School-Based Decision Making concerned the creation of an alternative classroom at the school site. The council had budgeted four thousand dollars for this project and the board had approved the budget. The council did not staff the position because the county was considering a program of this type at all schools. When it became apparent that the board was not going to create a system district-wide for projects of this type the council presented their individual request to the superintendent. The superintendent apprised the council that the board would not create the position for a program of this type.

The Division of Site-Based Decision Making responded to the local council’s request and allowed that school boards are responsible, within a school district, to create new positions. It is the obligation of the school board to
support the requests for the creation of positions when funds are available.

Council members felt that the state was attempting to appease both sides of the argument and by doing this, not providing direction.

It’s a gray area...It’s a gray area. If I hear that one more time I think I’ll scream. In their opinion the whole law is a gray area. Nobody up there wants to take a stand on anything. Even if we get a ruling in our favor the way it is worded is still subject to interpretation. (D.C., 3/92)

Council members expressed a willingness to work with the board to jointly solve problems directly related to the school. A hope for understanding and a desire for some type of middle ground in board/council relations was expressed.

I would like to see everybody working together. I think we could have a great school system if the board would go along with the council and the council would go along with the board. (D.C., 3/92)

The members of the school council realized that the council had not accomplished as much as they had hoped. The council had accomplished a great deal in the span of one year, but the accomplishment was somewhat overshadowed by the issues between the council and the board. The sentiment was expressed that many of the new programs and improvements
would not exist if the council had not fought hard to obtain them for the school.

Most council members expressed the belief that there had been change in the sentiment of the board toward the council in the course of the year. This change was for the positive and appeared to relieve some of the members. However, this positive change was not the greatest accomplishment in relation to board/council relations. Council members believed that they had created an awareness concerning council operations with the board, the superintendent, and the community. The opinion was that many more individuals now understood why councils were created and what councils were attempting to do.

...at least it made our higher-ups...they know we are here...I think they are beginning to realize that councils do have a little power. (D.C., 3/92)

...

I think one thing our council has done is created awareness in the county...We made the headlines on some issues and received some favorable press, I think...If nothing else, they know about the councils and know we’ve got one. (U.F., 3/92)

Members appeared to believe that the council had made a positive difference in the school. The opinion was that the council was the mediator between the teachers and the board. The council was viewed as the formal structure to present
concerns to the board. Mention was made about the council’s ability to present a more unified front in regard to board decisions than the system of the past. Historically, individual teachers or the principal had presented issues to the board and were often rejected, possibly without explanation. Council members stated that this new system allowed the school to know the rationale behind the acceptance or rejection of concerns.

When asked to discuss the other formal structure, the council itself, the members’ replies centered on the accomplishments of the council. Little mention was noted concerning teacher influence. The council operated informally and had established no formal method of obtaining teacher input. No documents were found that indicated any formal needs assessment or opinion survey that directly involved the teaching staff. Three simple surveys were conducted by the principal to gauge staff opinion on issues. The members all emphasized the importance of teacher input and, in no way, minimized the role of the other teachers in the school.

The only semi-formal method of obtaining teacher input appeared to be the use of a suggestion box placed near the teacher mailboxes. The council members mentioned this as a source of input and stated that the suggestion box was getting increasingly more use as the year progressed.
Teacher suggestions were read openly at the council meetings and discussed or tabled for future discussion.

One council member stressed the importance of council action in regard to the suggestion box. She also seemed to feel that the faculty was using the suggestion box as their primary input source. This was a change from the start of the year (prior to the suggestion box), where the primary input source was face to face interactions between a council member and a member of the staff.

This last time we had quite a few...like six or seven. I made the comment to them that if we didn’t act on the suggestion box...then we might as well not have it...If we act on them it gives it some credibility...if you don’t do something about it then, like I say, what’s the point in having it if all you are going to say is say...No, we can’t do it. (Z.O., 3/92)

The other major source of teacher input was teacher initiated conversations with council members. Council members mentioned that a number of teachers came to them to discuss concerns. Most expressed the sentiment that they hoped that teachers understood that they could come to any council member and express their viewpoint. One member did mention that the council had no way to seek input, other than the suggestion box. Another talked briefly about going to teachers who were having a problem with the adjustment to a new principal and discussing the issue with them. This
was the only recorded event of this type in the interviews. Other input factors that were mentioned revolved around teachers coming to council meetings and stating their opinion and/or concern.

The principal controlled the agenda for the meetings. The principal served as a clearinghouse for teachers and parents who wanted to be placed on the agenda. She also relayed information from the district or state level to the council through the agenda items. Council members could suggest additions to the agenda and did so on several occasions.

Ms. Q. always has it. We just tell her if we feel that something needs to be added...I don’t really tell her to put it on there. I just kinda [sic] suggest that it might need to be on there and we’ll kinda talk about it and if she thinks it needs to be on there she’ll put it on there. (C.C., 3/92)

The agenda included an agenda item labeled "other" that was designed to be a miscellaneous category, primarily reserved for the introduction of new business and to allow visitors a mechanism to introduce new business from the floor. It also included an item labeled "suggestions" that was used to introduce any suggestions found in the suggestion box.
Summary

Two formal impact agents emerged from the data. These could best be described as structural features that impact the perception of influence of teachers. The formal impact agent identified as historical included the hierarchial elements of the bureaucratic structure of schools. The one structural feature most often identified was the local school board. The formal impact agent identified as novel included new structural elements concerned with the governance of schools. The chosen novel impact agent was the local school council. These points and view and the formal impact agents are displayed in Figure 2.

The formal-historical impact agents were identified by the teachers as having a negative impact on the degree of influence perceived by teachers. Teachers did not see much change in how these structural features treated or viewed teachers. Teachers believed that the formal historical impact agents operated in much the same manner as they have in the past.

Teachers viewed the formal-historical impact agents as another layer in a multi-layered bureaucracy. In the teachers' eyes the formal historical structure was too removed from the daily issues of the school site to be
<table>
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<th>School Council (Novel)</th>
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<td>-traditional control and authority</td>
<td>-potential for change</td>
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<td>-opposed to change</td>
<td>-influential in improvement of school board relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>-sought to maintain control</td>
<td>-greater avenue for input</td>
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<tr>
<td>-utilized little or no input in process of making decision</td>
<td>-influential in obtaining new programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>-negative impact on teacher influence</td>
<td>-input and communication mechanisms need improvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-unequal access to council members allowed certain teachers greater influence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-positive impact on teacher influence</td>
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<td>-forum for personal expression</td>
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**Teacher Council Members' Points of View**

- board undermining mission of school board
- blocked the amount of influence that could be exerted by the council
- power and control by the school board
- board concerned with maintenance of traditional power base

- accomplishments overshadowed by power struggles with board
- mediator between teachers and the board
- created awareness of council operations
- creation of new programs were viewed as positive accomplishments
- little mention of methods to obtain teacher input
- informal conversation usually teacher initiated and listed as most common source of input
- principal controlled agenda

**Figure 2.** Formal impact agents and points of view.
sympathetic to the reality of the workplace. This structure was another piece of the bureaucracy concerned with the maintenance of their particular organizational level. Collectively, the teachers viewed themselves as a layer far beneath this structure, with little influence on the formal historical structure. Individual teachers believed that they had little or no influence on this structure or any of the structures above it.

Teacher council members expressed many of the same sentiments as the other teachers. The cooperation level between the board and the council was strained, at best. Power was viewed as being controlled by the board and the council was the recipient of any power that the board determined that they should have. As a result, the council believed that the amount of influence that they possessed in regard to the structural features above them was very limited. Issues were likely to be received favorably by the formal historical level if the issue did not remove or alter any significant power relationships.

The council members believed that the council, through its struggles, had created awareness of the goals of a council. The council viewed itself as a formal structure to appear before the board and represent the school in issues of concern to the board. The council, although proud of its accomplishments, tended to focus on the struggle for recognition as a key issue.
Teachers did perceive a greater degree of influence when discussing the other identified formal impact agent, the school council. In general terms, teachers believed that the council system gave them a forum for their concerns. It is interesting to note that teachers were not as concerned with the final council decision as they were with the fact that there was a mechanism in place that they could access.

For the most part, teachers viewed the council as a positive addition to the decision making process. Teachers could express personal and professional opinions in a forum that ensured that some action would occur. The action might be discussion and rejection, but the issue was heard. At least now I feel like someone is hearing me and listening. A lot of times these people are having the same feelings as you are and that helps...even if nothing is accomplished from it or not. (E.X., 3/92)

The data suggest that the addition of a forum for personal expression might be the most powerful impact that the council system has made upon the attitudes of the teachers operating under a council system.

Teachers were concerned about the methods the council used to access the opinions of the teachers. Although general satisfaction was noted concerning the overall council progress, specific issues were raised in the area of
process. For the most part, teachers wanted a systematic means for all teachers to provide feedback to the council.

The council seemed satisfied with the amount of teacher input. Members discussed the teachers coming to them frequently with concerns or questions. In addition to face to face conversation the suggestion box was identified as an important method for teacher input. Council members appeared to be focused on the goals of the council and did not verbalize at length concerning the input mechanisms.

Council members tended to focus on the accomplishments of the council and take ownership in the accomplishments. The members believed that the council was a valuable addition to the decision making process. Teachers began to understand the inner workings of the school (budget, staffing, etc.). Council members expressed a more general understanding of basic school functions. A better understanding of the varied responsibilities of the staff was expressed.

**Informal Impact Agents**

The informal impact agents centered on interactions that were observed or described. These interactions were identified as ceremonial or typical and presented in Figure 3. Ceremonial interactions were defined as interactions between teachers and council members that occurred in formal settings (council meetings, faculty meetings). Typical
interactions were defined as all other interactions between
council members and teachers.

----------------------------------------
Insert Figure 3 About Here
----------------------------------------

Ceremonial

Little evidence was found to support extensive
ceremonial interactions. For the most part, teachers did
not attend council meetings on a regular basis. When
teachers did attend, they were often invited by the council
to represent a particular viewpoint or they were interested in a
specific concern. Certain teachers expressed confusion regarding
the functioning of the council.

I’ve only attended the ones that I was asked to attend.
I mean, I just had the feeling that it was just for
council members. (D.U., 3/92)

...

If I had a specific complaint or concern then I
attended the meeting. If not, then I didn’t attend.
(E.F., 3/92)

...

My intentions were, in the beginning, to attend the
council meetings because I was interested in them...
but then I never had time to go. I just didn’t go
### Ceremonial

- Teachers' Points of View
  - Teachers attended council meetings when invited
  - Teachers attended meetings to voice specific concerns
  - Confusion regarding meeting times and dates
  - Regarded as formal meetings to discuss school business and not as a problem-solving forum
  - Preferred to present individual concerns in other ways
  - Teachers did not attend to gather information
  - Suggestion box used as input mechanism

### Typical

- Teachers sought out council members if they had specific complaints
- Informal, daily conversation was preferred method of communication
- Trust in the integrity of council members

### Teacher Council Members’ Points of View

- Suggestion box as the primary input mechanism
- Amount of faculty input perceived as sufficient
- Believed that if issue was important to teachers, then they would seek out council members
- Teacher attendance not viewed as critical

- Talked with more teachers than in the past
- Greater understanding of other’s roles and responsibilities
- Information network expanded
- Sought out certain teachers for opinions and direction

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**Figure 3.** Informal impact agents and points of view.
because I didn't feel like I was directly involved and there was a time when I wanted to be directly involved. (N.B., 3/92)

The appearance of teachers before the council was not a primary input mechanism. In the cases where input to the council occurred through the meetings, the teachers who participated in this format expressed satisfaction.

I did go before the council and present my reasons ...they all agreed and felt that those were good and I got that. (E.X. 3/92)

Certain teachers did, infrequently, attend meetings but much of that attendance was to gather information, not to attempt to influence the council in any degree.

I know the times that I have gone they have discussed things that I wouldn't have known anything about if I had not been at the council meeting. (K.T., 3/92)

Teachers viewed the council as important, but chose to work with the council through informal means. Input occurred informally, usually through conversation with an individual council member. The meetings were regarded as formal meetings to discuss the business of the school. The meetings were not, for the most part, regarded as exercises in problem solving. Teachers preferred to not use these meetings as opportunities to present individual viewpoints.

I see it [the council] as more formal than it was when we were there...I'm not saying that they don't discuss
but we did more brainstorming than we did anything else. I think you still need to do that. I think you look at your list and see where you are...what has been done and what still needs to be done. (K.T., 3/92)

The council members mentioned the suggestion box as the primary input mechanism for teachers. The development of an agenda item for the discussion of suggestions allows this item to be treated as a ceremonial issue. Although the council and the teachers did not interact in the typical sense, the process made this an important aspect of the decision making process and, thus, one aspect of the influence network.

Council members mentioned occasions where teachers appeared before the council to present a viewpoint.

...we’ve had people to come forward at the meeting that weren’t on the agenda and they have brought up situations. (Z.O., 3/92)

Council members felt that the amount of faculty input was sufficient for the council to function effectively. The belief was that if issues were important to the faculty they would seek out a council member and make their viewpoint known. Little evidence was seen that the ceremonial interactional pattern was viewed as significant in the functioning on this council.
Typical

Typical interaction patterns are defined as all interactions between teachers and the council that occurred outside the scope of formal meetings. These interactions form the crux of input received by the council.

Teachers did seek a council member if they had a specific complaint and felt that they could go to the council member. The discussion of issues also arose during casual discussion and opinions were expressed in that manner.

If I have a problem I usually tell them. I know all of them fairly well and they all know me well enough to know that I will tell them about it...in a nice way. (N.B., 3/92)

Informal methods were employed by the teaching staff to provide input to the council. Teachers talked to the council members and expressed their opinions.

I try to take it upon myself to talk to them if I feel I need to because that is the only way that you can expect people to know what you are thinking. In this school, right now, you just sorta [sic] have to do that because there is not those occasions for you to do it otherwise. (K.T., 3/92)

Little or no "electioneering" was evident. The council members sought input in certain cases, from certain
individuals, but this was not found to be a general condition of the school.

The element of trust emerged from the interview process. Most teachers expressed complete trust in the integrity of the council members. Even if decisions were questioned, the motivation and integrity of the individual members were not an issue. Teachers believed that the council made a sincere effort to improve the school.

Council members indicated that they talked to more teachers than they had before. Through this type of conversation, the members believed that they were beginning to understand other's roles and responsibilities. Council members agreed that many teachers expressed opinions to them about a wide variety of subjects. The majority of these discussions occurred during the school day. Accessibility, teacher motivation, and convenience were issues that determined the extent and the intensity of these interactions.

The information network in this school expanded during this study. More frequent discussions of school related matters were observed. Teachers talked to other teachers outside their primary grouping unit (primary, intermediate, and junior high). There were more interactions between small groups and individuals outside these groups.
Summary

Two informal impact agents emerged from the study. Interactions between council members and the teachers were noted as falling into categories termed ceremonial or typical. Ceremonial interactions were defined as interactions between teachers and council members that occurred in formal settings (council meetings, faculty meetings, etc.). Typical interactions were defined as other interactions that occurred outside the formal settings.

Teachers, for the most part, did not attend council meetings. Reasons cited included inconvenience, lack of notification, and trust for the people making the decisions. Teachers who did attend council meetings were interested in specific issues, gathering information, or were attending at the request of the council. Teachers who did present issues to the council were satisfied with the outcome of the council’s decisions.

One input mechanism cited by teachers as a primary method to provide input to the council was the suggestion box. An agenda item was reserved for the reading of suggestions at the council meetings. Although this cannot be classified as a personal interaction, the formal method of treating the suggestion determines its classification in this area. Teachers felt that the suggestion box was their primary method to inform the council of concerns at council meetings.
Council members did not dwell on the attendance of teachers at council meetings. Most appeared satisfied with the amount of teacher input from conversation and the suggestion box. Teacher attendance and presentation at meetings were not viewed as critical by the council members. As a result of the infrequency of teacher attendance at council meetings, little data were gathered concerning ceremonial interactions.

The interaction pattern termed typical was seen by the teachers as the primary method that allowed them to exert influence at the worksite. Teachers did talk to council members regarding issues and concerns. This talk was often casual conversation or the result of a teacher seeking a council member to present a particular viewpoint. Numerous references to this type of discussion were found.

Little evidence was found to support a systematic procedure that teachers used frequently to provide input. Although some mechanisms were in place for this method of input, teachers preferred to talk directly to council members. Informal conversation was the preferred method of input. For the most part, these conversations were teacher initiated. Some evidence exists to indicate that council members sought out selected teachers to seek input. This was not the general condition of the school, however.

Council members mentioned the amount of informal teacher/council member conversations as the most frequent
input method. Council members noted that they were talking
to more teachers and understanding more varied viewpoints
than they had in the past.

The information network expanded during the length of
this study. More interactions among teachers who had not
interacted in the past were noted. Discussion crossed group
lines, grade and group level boundaries, and proximity
barriers.
CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree of perceived teacher influence at a school with a site-based decision making council. The initial conceptual framework suggests a relationship between the structural factors to which the influence is directed and the degree of influence perceived by the teacher. The method of interaction chosen by teachers to access the structural features appeared to be significant in regard to teachers' desire for more influence at the worksite.

Conclusions

The desire to exert more influence at the worksite has traditionally been denied because there were few systematic mechanisms to accomplish this task. Two distinct structural features dominated teacher discussions of influence. The structural feature referred to as formal-historical was frequently mentioned as a barrier to teacher influence. Teachers saw little change in the bureaucratic nature of schools at this level. The amount of perceived influence that individual teachers believed that they possessed in relation to this level was minimal.

Traditional patterns of interaction are difficult to alter, especially when one or both parties are committed to maintenance of the status quo. The formal-historical feature appeared to be a barrier to change and to any alteration in
power, influence, or authority relationships. Teachers perceived their actual influence over these structures as similar to what they had felt in the past.

Council members expressed frustration with the formal historical element as well. Council members talked frequently about power struggles that the council had experienced with the formal-historical structural feature. The degree of influence that council members perceived that they could exert toward this group was greater than that perceived by other teachers, but not as great as the council members had hoped. Influence was measured, by the council members, in terms of programs and changes in structures for gaining approval.

Teachers viewed the other formal structural features as far more accessible when discussing teacher influence. The school council, termed the formal novel structural feature, was seen as an advocate. Teachers often viewed the council as the school's representative to the formal-historical structure.

Teachers frequently discussed issues with council members and were satisfied with actions taken on issues. One important element, at least to the teachers, was the creation of a structural feature that would allow teachers to comment freely regarding school concerns. The creation of a system that would listen to teachers was important to teachers and consistent throughout the study.
Teachers admitted that council operation was not without fault. A frequently mentioned item was the absence of any systematic method for seeking input from teachers for council decisions. Teachers wanted to have greater input but felt somewhat blocked by the absence of a systematic structure to seek input. The general attitude was that those who were concerned about an issue made sure that they were heard, but that others were somewhat excluded, by their own admission, from the process.

The council was viewed as a potentially powerful mechanism to affect the perceived degree of teacher influence. Accessibility and concern were mentioned as factors in teacher beliefs about the importance of the council. Although some teachers were not satisfied with the process of operation employed by the council, all teachers did view the council as an important addition to the school. The creation of programs and changes within the school were credited to the council. Teachers believed that the council allowed them greater influence, not only at the school site but in regard to the formal-historical structure as well.

Teachers believed that the addition of the council provided them with the potential for more influence at the school. The actual amount of influence perceived varied between teachers and was attributed, by the teachers themselves, to factors related to the accessibility of council members to teachers.
Council members saw the addition of the council to the school as a powerful agent in making the school's goals known to the formal-historical structure. This power was measured in terms of programs implemented. The council members viewed themselves as influential in the school decision making process. Council members did not focus as intensely on individual teacher influence, but chose to focus on the influence of the council in the overall operation of the school. The amount of teacher input, a possible determinate in overall teacher perception of influence, was not deemed a significant problem to the council. The council believed that teachers, if interested enough in an issue, would seek out council members and ensure that they had sufficient input.

Council members mentioned the frequency of teacher/council member interactions as significant to the study of teacher input. Interaction patterns, termed the informal impact agents, were labeled ceremonial and typical. A minimal number of ceremonial interactions were observed in this study. Teachers preferred to discuss issues with council members in an informal atmosphere. Little evidence was found that provided information as to ceremonial interaction patterns.

The interaction pattern termed typical was the preferred method of influence for teachers. Much of the input that the council received came from such interactions.
The accessibility of council members and the absence of more formal methods that were easily accessible to the teachers were noted concerns. Teachers wanted influence at the school and believed that informal interaction with the council provided them with an avenue for such influence.

Implications

Data presented suggest that there are at least five implications to be considered from this study. The primary structural factor identified as having a negative impact on teacher perceived degree of influence was the formal historical structure. Teachers believed that this structure operated in much the same manner as it had before the creation of the council system. Teachers felt blocked, by bureaucratic structural features, from exerting any significant influence at this level.

With this in mind, any change in the governance system of schools should consider the impact of change on the levels of bureaucracy above the school site. If these levels continue to operate under the same concept of power, and levels beneath them operate under a different power concept, then organizational effectiveness is likely to be reduced.

Any state education system undertaking the move to site-based decision making would be advised to consider extensive training and support directed toward all organizational levels in regard to an understanding of
organizational development as it relates to power, authority, and influence structures. The higher organizational levels should also understand that local levels of bureaucracy can only model what is modeled for them. As a result, state level bureaucracy should consider operating in a more collaborative mode with local districts and individual schools to demonstrate what can be accomplished through power sharing.

The literature on teacher satisfaction and teacher empowerment points to a need for the involvement of teachers in the local decision making process. A move to site-based decision making should consider adequate support mechanisms prior to the adoption of the process. Training and support must be provided for the decision making councils and the schools that they serve prior to adoption.

The change in the decision making process is as much an attitudinal change as it is programmatic. Research on the change process demonstrates that the change process is slow and incremental. If the organizational goal is to change the way that decisions are made at the school level then all school councils must "relearn" what they know about the bureaucratic nature of schools. Time and training of all school councils is an important consideration.

The council changed the perceived amount of influence that the teachers felt toward decisions that were made at this school. Teachers, at least at this location, wanted to
be more fully involved in the process. This suggests that a more thorough understanding of group processes by the council and the utilization of some type of organizational development intervention may be needed.

Any consideration regarding the implementation of a decision making program of this type should consider the implications that years of bureaucratic rule have had on the socialization of teachers. The de-professionalization of teaching should be considered as a factor in the increased demands on teachers to be involved in the decision making process. Teachers have operated under the bureaucratic model for a long time and have become frustrated with their inability to control their worklife, resulting in apathy and resentment.

The adoption of organizational models that would decrease state and district bureaucracy and move toward collaborative models is urged. Within these models opportunities should exist for teachers to gain some of the rights and the responsibilities of more established professions.

Research identifies the school principal as crucial for the successful implementation of any type of site-based decision making model. Training is urged in this area as well. Educational leadership preparation programs must develop school leaders rather than school managers, if the successful implementation of school-based decision making is
to become a reality. School leaders should be nurtured and provided with large support networks of like-minded colleagues.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research into the perceived influence of teachers at sites with school-based decision making bodies is recommended. Although school-based decision making is not a new concept, the realities of implementation from the perspective of the teaching staff has not been the focus of considerable research. If school-based decision making is to change how schools operate then the people who perform the operations must be understood.

A follow-up study of the staff at Tuckasee Elementary School is suggested. The degree of perceived influence of teachers should be documented as the council process becomes a way of life at the school. The modification of perception, as council and staff composition changes, that a long-term study might reveal could add to the knowledge base of school-based decision making.

The business of schooling is a human enterprise and should be treated as such. Additional studies related to perceived influence should target other school personnel, to provide further knowledge into how innovations affect the human element of schools.
APPENDIX A

Sample Interview Questions

#1 Please explain why you chose to attend or to not attend school council meetings.

#2 Explain how often you discuss school concerns with any council member.

#3 What is the nature of those concerns?

#4 Discuss how you are informed about upcoming council concerns.

#5 Do you believe that this is an effective way to share information?

#6 Discuss to what degree the school council has provided an avenue for school-based decision making.

#7 Specifically, how does the council obtain your input regarding school decisions?

#8 Explain the ways that you believe councils have changed the way this school operates.

#9 Discuss the strengths that you believe this council possesses.

#10 What do you believe are this council’s greatest shortcomings?

#11 Discuss the council’s greatest accomplishments.

#12 Explain what you wish this council had accomplished that it did not accomplish.

#13 If it were up to you, describe what this school would

#14 How do you believe that the council could bring this about?
APPENDIX B

Sample Interview Transcription

#1 My intentions were, in the beginning, to attend the council meetings because I was very interested in them but then I never had time to go. I just didn’t go because I didn’t feel like I was directly involved and there was a time that I wanted to be directly involved and it’s not... so I just don’t go.

#2 Informally, real often. If I have a problem I usually tell them. I know all of them fairly well and they all know me well enough to know that I will tell them about it in a nice way.

#3 One of the main concerns was our parking situation. Another concern is, or was, the way that...the communication between the...our new principal and us. I didn’t feel it was what it should be. It’s better now.

#4 I’ve never heard anything about any of it except through a newsletter. If there is anything told it is through a newsletter. They certainly never seek me out.

#5 No! I don’t feel directly involved. It may be that I am not supposed to be directly involved and if not, that’s fine. From the beginning, when they started the site-based council I was very interested in it because I thought that was so neat that we could be involved in the decisions that were made... and we are more than we ever have been before. But it is still not what I thought it should be or was gonna [sic] be.

#6 Sorta [sic]...not to the extent that I think it should be. I know the people don’t like...it’s very unhandy to have a lot of teachers meetings but I think at some point we need to get together about these things. And when we do have teachers meetings we don’t talk about the things that are a concern to the council. I think we should all have a say. And we elect those people to represent us which is exactly what they are doing but I still think there comes a time when we should have a say. We should get together. It’s like some of the things were too hush-hush to talk about in the open. They were just talked about behind the scenes and within their group and within this group...never together. Then maybe, again, tensions...I don’t feel
Appendix B (Continued)

they are as bad as they were. It doesn’t bother me as much and I don’t think it bothers other people as much. You learn to live...you learn to take...I’ve learned to take some things and I think other people have too that I wasn’t willing to take before. I just sluff it off and go on.

#7 No, they don’t seek out my input nor have they done anything about my complaints. Not that they should have but they haven’t. And I wasn’t the only one that had a problem.

#8 I think it has. I think we all feel, even though we are not directly involved, I think we feel more like we do have a bit of a say, more so than we used to. There are some things now that I feel we can make some decisions about where we could never even...it wouldn’t have mattered if we had cared...about anything...because Mr. [principal] or the board was making the decision before...where we can make some decisions now. I feel that those decisions are ours to make because this is our school and who better to say than us.

#9 All the people on the council have strong personalities and I think that they, in a heartbeat, will let them know what we want... and they don’t give up. Specifically, our parent members, have taken care of so much of what needed to be taken care of with central office and have accomplished so much. They don’t give up. I think that’s great. I think they have been more effective in working with central office in this case.

#10 Not including the rest of us in a lot of the things that go on. I don’t find out about it until it is over and I’d like to know about it beforehand. That’s just me, it might not be anybody else.

#11 For me, the greatest accomplishment has been the ALC. I think that they finally told them that, made them understand that we had the money for it and they had no right to tell us that we couldn’t have it. And personally, I need it...and it has been beneficial for me.

#12 I wish that the parking situation had not happened. I wish that there had been some other solution besides the solution that was come up with. I think that is something that 95% of the people who are here wish.
Appendix B (Continued)

It’s not just me and I think that’s another thing that I feel is our decision to make. It’s not theirs, this is our school.

#13 I think that we do a real good job anyway. My dream is the positive attitudes throughout the school for the children and for the teachers. Not just for us, because it’s got to be everybody. I wish that we had some kind of school-wide discipline... and assertive discipline is my thing, I love it. And if everybody in the school were using something along that line and we focused more on positive things and... rather than negative I think we could accomplish a lot. I feel we all do as good a job as we can do teaching and I think 99% of it is attitude. If we could correct that problem we could correct a whole lot. We could get more out of them in every way. I think, in all of the schools that I have been in, that we stand up for each other and stand together better than most anywhere I have been. And there is camaraderie here that is not in other places. I think we can build on that.

#14 They would have to be involved in developing that positive attitude and the positive discipline. See, when we worked on the discipline committee back last Spring and Summer, to come up with some kind of policy, the part that I wanted to be a part of was the positive side that N. was doing and I never have seen very much of that. I haven’t seen any of it as a matter of fact...nothing! And to me that was the most important part of the discipline policy and it never materialized, as far as I saw. It may be downstairs but it certainly isn’t up here. It’s hard to be around people, and I don’t know how the council can have anything to do with it, but it’s hard to be around people who are negative all the time and for you to still stay up and positive. It’s really hard to do that. I really don’t know what they could do. They would have to be involved in it anyway because that’s the only way it could be implemented throughout the building is through their involvement. I haven’t seen anything come out positive dealing with behavior. I think if you can get that problem under control the rest of it just comes. And that problem is not under control. It’s not bad, it’s been worse. Class size is something that would make a difference as well. I accomplished so much more last year than I have this year and it was because of the smaller class. Now, sometimes I feel like if I can just keep them from
Appendix B (Continued)

killing each other that I have accomplished something regardless of what I teach them. But I never felt like that last year. I had problems with a couple of guys last year but it was nothing like it is this year. 16 to 18 is perfect, with these guys you can do anything at this age.
APPENDIX C

Survey Instrument

1. Please indicate the actual amount of influence that you believe each of the following groups or persons has now in determining what changes (innovations, procedures, programs) are attempted in this school. Please indicate how much influence each person or group has by circling the appropriate number.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Considerable</th>
<th>A great deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The superintendent</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>The principal</td>
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<td>(for example, primary)</td>
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<td>(for example, 8th)</td>
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<td>You, as a teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher organizations</td>
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<td>Other (specify)</td>
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2. How much influence do you think these groups or persons ought to have in determining changes in your school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Circle one number at the left and one number at the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The way things are</th>
<th>The way things should be</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Decisions are made through the council.
2. Faculty input is used to make major decisions by the council.
3. You take part in making decisions that affect you.
4. Decisions are made by those who know the most about the problem.
5. Your input is valued by the council.
6. Council Decisions are made in such a way that you don't mind carrying them out.
7. The principal works with the people below him to make decisions.
Appendix C (Continued)

8. The school board works with the school to make decisions affecting the school.

9. Your opinion is valued by central office.

When you want approval in this school for an idea or a proposal, it is sometimes helpful to enlist the support of certain individuals in your school. Please list below, by name, the individuals whose support would help most in obtaining approval for your idea.


Please mark the column that indicates your best estimate of the influence of teachers and principals on the areas of school life listed at the left.

In general, how much influence....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Considerable</th>
<th>Great</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the principal have on how the school is run?</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>little</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the council have on how the school is run?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do teachers have on how the school is run?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do teachers have on the council’s decisions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do teachers have on the principal’s decisions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


