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Teachers' Perception of Empowerment in Christian Schools Accredited by Tennessee

Association of Christian Schools

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A dissertation

presented to

The faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Melody Archer

December 2014

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Dr. Virginia Foley

Dr. Pam Evanshen

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Dr. Don Good

Keyword: Teacher Empowerment

## ABSTRACT

### Teachers' Perception of Empowerment in Christian Schools Accredited by Tennessee Association of Christian Schools

by

Melody Archer

The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of teacher empowerment in Christian schools in order to ascertain if teachers were encouraged to take on more leadership responsibilities. One hundred forty-four teachers from 9 Christian schools (K-12) that are accredited by the Tennessee of Association of Christian Schools (TACS) participated in the study.

The statistical analysis reported in the study was based on 5 research questions. Two instruments were used to collect data. A survey using a 5-point Likert Scale was used to collect data on teacher responsibilities, training, experiences, affiliation, and professional practices. Student achievement test scores from SAT-10 for the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years for grades 5, 8, and 11 were used to see if there is a correlation between teachers' perception of empowerment and student achievement.

A series of single sample *t*-tests were used to determine if there were significant differences between 2 independent groups. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to measure the relationship between teachers' empowerment scores and their averaged student achievement test scores.

The teachers perceived they were significantly empowered in practices, beliefs, and experiences. However, they perceived they were significantly unempowered in leadership, decision-making, and professional development. The results of the correlation indicated that teachers' empowerment scores may be useful in predicting student achievement but not to a significant extent.

Understanding empowerment and its benefits is essential for administrators and teachers who work in Christian school settings. Christian schools experience the same challenges and pressures that public schools face; therefore, creating empowered environments is one step toward positive change. Christian leaders who value research and who are committed to excellence will desire to assess every academic area and organizational structure in order to plan, monitor, and continue improvement efforts.

## DEDICATION

It is with much love and admiration that I dedicate the contents of this extensive project. My inspiration and focus has been enhanced and broadened by the unfaltering support and deepened determinations of these thoughtful and caring people.

To my parents, the Reverend and Mrs. Ron E. Thompson, I will forever be indebted to you and your spiritual guidance. Your modeling of faithfulness and dedication to our Father has instilled in me the foundation I claim today. I am who I am because of you, our Father, and blessings beyond my humble comprehension. Thank you seems such an unworthy expression of appreciation for all you have done for me. I thank you from the bottom of my humble heart. I love you.

My long-suffering husband, Kent Archer, and my two beloved daughters, Magan and Camilla, will forever be admired for enduring the trials of being ignored. Kent, my love, I adore you for gently and affectionately pushing and encouraging me to persevere and keep my focus on the prize at the end of this academic goal. Without you and our daughters it is doubtful that this project would have been completed. I am forever dedicated to you. *If ever two were one, then surely we.*

*“Forever yours”*

Magan and Camilla, I love you for never complaining when we ate buckets of Kentucky Fried Chicken, eating your dad’s spaghetti or when both of you girls were on KP duty as you made meatloaf and then were responsible for cleaning the kitchen again—all because I had to write, type, rewrite, and retype. Thank you girls for wearing your clothes more than once because I was again toiling on another college assignment instead of doing the laundry. Girls, you have my heart. I am so thankful that God chose me to be your mother. Love you so much.

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This project has been in the making for two years from conception to completion. I am delighted to acknowledge two exemplary individuals who have guided my every thought in the process.

Virginia Foley, Ed.D. was the one who *chose* to be the Chair of my Committee. Dr. Foley has my respect as a gentle soul in her positive corrections throughout my journey. She took me under her wing and advised with a caring and supportive heart. Her guidance will remain with me in all I do. Thank you, Dr. Foley, for being my mentor and friend.

How do I begin to express the appreciation my heart holds for the person who led the way for each of my triumphs as well as my stumbles? How do I acknowledge the positive and loving memories as well as the silent prayers on my behalf? How do I ever thank you in a way that is worthy of your love and devotion to me? The Reverend Ron E. Thompson, Emeritus, my father, has given countless hours of editing and thought provoking questions that have led to the culmination of this endeavor. I doubt that I will ever be able to express the love, respect, and admiration I hold for you, my father, my guide, my editor, my anchor. I am forever humbled and thankful for your Christian values and your tireless dedication to me and this project. Thank you for believing in me. I love you, Daddy, with my whole heart.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Educational reform efforts to improve American schools have challenged administrators to build an educational environment that empowers teachers to become leaders (Terry, 1998). Empowering teachers has been the spark needed to ignite a sweeping change in our educational system (Hoyer, 2001). Empowerment has transformed a teacher's mindset to working *with* a principal as opposed to working *for* a principal (Terry, 1998). According to Olson (2009) shared governance is simply encouraging groups of people to participate in the decision-making processes, usually achieved through elected representatives. Certain groups are also given specific assignments that are associated with decision-making opportunities. Moolenaar, Slegers, and Daly (2012) found a link between empowerment and professional growth, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. School leaders who incorporate shared governance encourage teachers to participate in planning and decision-making processes and to serve on a variety of program committees (Hirsh, 2011; Olson, 2009; Overton, 2009). School administrators who embrace a new perspective of leadership responsibilities create a trusting respectful environment and delegate authority to teachers through empowerment (Terry, 1998).

Short (1996) helped school leaders understand the process of empowering teachers. An important aspect of empowerment was being involved with decisions that directly related to employees work. Short said the more teachers feel directly connected to student learning, the more the teachers believe they should be held responsible for their work. This level of participation requires teachers to have faith and confidence that their opinions are valued and essential to students and program success (Short, 1994).

The opportunity for professional growth is another aspect of empowerment. Empowered teachers desire to expand their skills and knowledge. Having confidence and a healthy self-esteem is an important part of teacher empowerment and could be increased through opportunities such as being a presenter at educator workshops and conventions (Short, 1994).

Status and self-efficacy play an important role in developing empowered teachers. Status refers to the way a teacher is viewed in the eyes of his or her peers. How one is perceived plays a major role in building a healthy sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Self-efficacy focuses on the teachers' belief that they are personally competent to effect change. Enderline-Lampe (2002) and Short (1994) reported that empowered teachers believed they possessed the skills and ability to establish programs that affected student learning.

Autonomy is another critical feature of teacher empowerment but is often tricky to implement. Teachers need to manage their own environment and set their own rules and conditions but within specific boundaries. Short (1994) cautioned that while teachers have freedoms, they cannot be given total freedom to do whatever they please regardless of the consequences. School leaders are urged to build teachers' sense of autonomy by encouraging risk taking and experimentation. Teachers are encouraged to try new teaching methods or to implement a unique activity. Teachers who experienced engaged autonomy described their administrator as an instructional leader, one who provided positive feedback and treated teachers as professionals (Allington, Day, & Gabriel, 2011; Short, 1994).

Short's (1994) understanding of teacher empowerment led administrators to rethink their role and the role of teachers. The collaborative efforts of both the school administrator and teachers resulted in an increase in personal development, motivation, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness.

Educational studies over the years have focused on leadership styles and their impact on teacher empowerment (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2012; DeFlaminis & O'Toole, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2012; Salameh, 2011). This research has been conducted to investigate the effects of leadership on student performance, teacher effectiveness, and overall success of the school program. The transformational style of leadership has been quite popular in the field of education and has been known to be very effective in empowering teachers (Choudhary et al., 2012; Onorato, 2013). Servant leadership is not new but has gained attention in the past few years (Cerit, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2012; Salameh, 2011). Distributive leadership has also been reviewed and is considered to be very influential when creating empowering environments (DeFlaminis & O'Toole; Naicker & Mestry, 2011). These different leadership styles continue to be explored to determine how their behavior affects teacher empowerment. Even though empowerment and its level of impact in the field of education continues to be discussed, research supports the idea that teacher empowerment has been a positive influence on organizational effectiveness (Choudhary et al., 2012; DeFlaminis & O'Toole; Parris & Peachey, 2012; Salameh, 2011).

#### *Statement of the Problem*

The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of teacher empowerment in Christian schools in order to determine if teachers are encouraged to take on more leadership responsibilities. Educational research that studied empowerment mainly targeted public institutions and gave less attention to Christian school settings.

As schools become more complex and administrators struggle to keep up with the demands and challenges of school leadership the organizational climate is moving away from a vertical, bureaucratic form of leadership and more towards a horizontal form where leadership

responsibilities are shared (Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012). Shee, Ji, and Boyatt (2002) reported that in Christian schools where leaders support a bureaucratic structure teachers' opportunities to increase responsibility and step into leadership roles are limited. Parsons and Beauchamp added that schools where leadership is shared and nurtured are the most successful. Because Christian schools are not immune to the same issues faced by public schools, principals of Christian schools will also benefit from research suggesting strategies to impact school change and increase program effectiveness (Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012; Shee et al., 2002).

The changes that are needed in schools rest on the shoulders of administrators. The implications brought to light by research (Hawkins, 2009; Hollingworth, 2012; Korkmaz, 2007; Kurt, Duyar, & Calik, 2012) encourage school administrators to study the impact of leadership styles on teacher empowerment. Administrators work to create a caring environment that empowers teachers to become leaders. Teachers are given opportunity to participate in shared decision-making opportunities, serve on committees that center on school improvement initiatives, and conduct interviews with prospective new faculty members. Teachers are unified with school leadership to support a common goal. School programs begin to transform only when administrators are working towards creating an environment that supports teacher empowerment (Cerit, 2009; Choudhary et al., 2012; Du, Swaen, & Lindgreen, 2012).

This study examined the perception of teacher empowerment in Christian schools in order to ascertain if teachers were encouraged to take on more leadership responsibilities. A survey was used to collect data on teacher responsibilities, training, experiences, affiliation, and professional practices. Student achievement test scores were examined to see if there was a correlation between teachers' perception of empowerment student achievement. The total group scores for math and language were collected from grades 5, 8, and 11. Administrators

completed a form that identified test scores for 2009 -2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 school years. The information gleaned from this study when added to the body of literature on the importance of teacher empowerment from a private Christian setting would also be beneficial to school leadership practices. If principals of private schools valued and embraced new leadership practices, it could result in increased teacher commitment, participation, professional development, and student achievement.

### *Research Questions*

Through the analysis of surveys, the researcher measured teachers' perceptions of their empowerment while working in a Christian school that is also accredited by the Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS). The following research questions guided this study:

1. Are teacher empowerment scores in leadership and decision making significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?
2. Are teacher empowerment scores in professional practices significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?
3. Are teacher empowerment scores in responsibility for their own professional growth significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?
4. Are teachers' beliefs and experiences significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?
5. Is there a significant correlation between teacher empowerment scores and their averaged student achievement test scores?



### *Significance of the Study*

This study provides clarification of the construct and benefits of teacher empowerment in the Christian school setting. The review of the literature revealed how styles of leadership can nurture and support an empowered environment. The findings from this quantitative study will add to the limited body of research on Christian schools and teacher empowerment.

### *Definition of Terms*

In order for the reader to have a clear understanding of the researcher's objective, the following terms are listed and defined.

1. Administrator – School principal or school leader.
2. Empowerment - Rinehart and Short defined empowerment as occasions where a person can sovereignly choose, accept obligation, and share in the decision-making processes (1993). Empowerment has often gotten translated into shared decision-making, teamwork, delegation of authority, and professional growth. According to Short, Greer, and Melvin (1994) empowerment has been the practice where school members cultivate the knowledge to oversee their own professional development and settle their own difficulties.
3. Teacher Certification for Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS) – TACS requires teachers to have obtained one of the following credentials prior to the onset of teaching: doctorate in education or an appropriate subject field; master's in education; bachelor's of science or art in education; associate's degree that includes 90 contact hours in the field of education with the assumption that a bachelor's degree in education will be obtained within 6 years.

4. Teacher Empowerment - Hoy and Miskel (2005) defined teacher empowerment as the practice whereby administrators allocate power and encourage or assist teachers to use it in ways that benefit themselves and their profession.

#### *Delimitations*

This study was delimited to 13 Christian K-12 schools that were accredited by the Tennessee of Association of Christian Schools (TACS). Other Christian schools throughout the state of Tennessee were not a part of the study because they were not accredited or were accredited by agencies whose standards were not in alignment with TACS.

#### *Overview of the Study*

This quantitative study has been arranged and organized into five unique chapters. Chapter 1 presents a brief introduction and overview of the historical perspective of teacher empowerment. The statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations, and limitations are also included. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature that addresses empowerment as it relates to teachers and school leadership styles. Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the methodology of the study. Specific divisions include research questions, null hypotheses, the population, data collection, and data analyses. Chapter 4 provides the study's findings as they relate to each research question. Finally, Chapter 5 presents the conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The roles of school administrators and teachers have been evolving and changing (Howard & Parker, 2009; Lontos, 1993; Nir & Kranot, 2006; Prytula, Noonan, & Hellsten, 2013; Renihan & Noonan, 2012; Smith & Piele, 1997; Williams, 2006). Teachers' responsibilities are to teach students but have also extended beyond the classroom. Participating in shared decision-making opportunities and serving on committees such as school improvement or curriculum teams are examples of duties outside the classroom. Serving on the school board or conducting interviews with prospective new faculty members are additional examples of leadership roles that have also been extended to teachers (Allington et al., 2011; Enderline-Lampe, 2002; Rinehart & Short, 1993). School administrators look beyond program management and more toward a leadership role or a facilitator role that encourages followers to believe in a shared vision. Leaders who embrace a shared governance philosophy support a collaborative team environment and value employee feedback and creativity. Schools have been led by principals who not only had the knowledge to oversee areas such as budget and finance but who also had the ability to unify, motivate, and empower their followers to create a nurturing environment and a culture for success. Because the impact of administrators and teachers on student success was so great, school systems have redefined expectations and responsibilities (Rinehart & Short, 1993; Stone, 1995). The change needed in our schools to create a caring environment has rested on the shoulders of school leadership. School programs have transformed when administrators worked towards creating environments that empowered teachers to become leaders and teachers were unified with school leadership to support a common goal (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Whitaker, 2003).

Researchers such as Herzberg (1968) have led to the restructuring of organizations within the business world as well as in educational settings. To better understand employees' attitudes and motivations, Herzberg studied what factors in the workplace caused job satisfaction and what factors caused dissatisfaction. Findings from his research supported the belief that factors such as salary, fringe benefits, and working environments helped prevent job dissatisfaction; however, they did not motivate the employee. Herzberg reported factors such as achievement, recognition, meaningful work, responsibility, advancement, and growth increased job satisfaction and the desire to improve self-performance. Motivation was achieved through empowerment.

According to Herzberg (1968, 1984) motivation is the way a manager empowers employees to do their jobs. Musselwhite (2007) wrote that this process begins by creating an atmosphere with working conditions that support achievement, recognition, meaningful work, advancement, and growth. Managers recognize the advantages of empowered employee. Anderson (2013) reported that motivated employees are more likely to perform at their best, find solutions to their own problems, tackle challenges with confidence, and seek additional knowledge.

Management thinking today still carries the influence of Herzberg. Many organizations have moved more toward a horizontal structure where a culture of collaboration and teamwork are valued (Creekmore, 2011). School leaders have embraced collaborative efforts because of the knowledge gained through the process. Participation by and the opinions of teachers have been sought and used by school leaders. Teachers have also become more involved in the decision-making process. Problem solving is determined best when multiple solutions are generated. In contrast a vertical form of leadership structure reflects a hierarchy bureaucracy.

Historically the organizational structure of schools was arranged to reflect formal bureaucratic positions and offices. Expectations were outlined and clearly defined for each employee. Leaders were less flexible in their thinking. Problems were solved through one-way thinking (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Administrators hired and fired, purchased curriculum, ensured the programs were running smoothly, and maintained the yearly budget. Teachers developed lesson plans, created learning activities, and reported student progress to parents. Rules and regulations were established and aligned with the school's mission (Mahmook, Basharat, & Bashir, 2012).

### *Approaches to Leadership*

One way to determine if a school's structure is vertical or horizontal is by observing the culture. According to Hoy and Miskel (2005) social interactions and social norms establish a school's distinct culture. The behavior of its members is controlled by bureaucratic expectations and by individual needs. The ratio of political control and being controlled based on individual needs is influenced by the school leader. Shee et al. (2002) investigated the leadership style of principals of Christian schools. Four types of leaders were used for classification: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Structural leaders were described as mapping out a blueprint of goal achieving roles and relationships. In this environment leaders can best rule over their employees. The school culture reflected bureaucracy, rules, and procedures. The human resource leader emphasized empowerment, achievement, and development of skills that furthered the growth of both the employers and the employees. The premise was that when leaders match up the employees' jobs with their needs, productivity will increase. The political leader was characterized by mutual give-and-take exchanges in which opponents barter within and without the organization. This leader worked to achieve group unity thinking through social pressure conformities. The symbolic leader was focused with conveying core values and

demonstrating appropriate behavior. The use of influence was very important to the symbolic leader. Once a symbolic culture is created in the school, it becomes an influential factor in what people think and how they behave. The results of the study showed that the human resource leader and structural leader were the most used among principals of Christian schools. The human resource leader had the highest mean rating of 69% in the *often* and *always* categories on the Likert scale. The structural leadership was slightly less at 52%. Although structural leadership ranked second, it was very interesting to note that a large number of Christian school leaders saw themselves as individuals who influence the social norms in order for the program to run most efficiently and effectively. Research of school structure and leadership in Christian schools is very limited. Schools may vary between a vertical and a horizontal form of organizational structure; however, school culture and the responsibilities of school leaders and teachers have changed due to a shift in accountability brought on through political and societal pressures (Creekmore, 2011; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Rinehart & Short, 1994).

### *Motivation*

Based on the work of Kitsantas and Ware (2007), an organization where the culture was focused on employee motivation through empowerment and shared governance has less burnout and an increase in the quality of performance and commitment to work. Businesses discovered that empowered employees result in increased productivity. Anderson (2013) said that when empowered, employees know that their ideas matter, they have a stronger sense of responsibility.

According to Musselwhite (2007) six key points are considered important when creating an environment that fosters true motivation: motivation versus rewards, natural problem solvers, trust, the role as coach, positive interaction, and recognition.

### *Motivation Versus Rewards*

First, the difference between motivation and reward should be understood by managers. Managers who used extrinsic rewards found that the items used to increase work productivity were the very things that would ultimately cause employees to become unmotivated, which in turn could lead to decrease work productivity. Extrinsic rewards became expected. When rewards were reduced or completely eliminated, disappointment set in and the employees became less satisfied with their jobs. Changes that were intended to motivate focused around a person's sense of achievement such as a manager publically recognizing an employee's outstanding leadership skills. Such recognition led to increased job satisfaction. Musselwhite (2007) noted that managers were instrumental in promoting growth and development.

### *Natural Problem Solvers*

Second, managers recognized that people are natural problem solvers. People demonstrate a natural desire to express opinions and to have an understanding of how things work especially when it pertains to work responsibilities. Managers who desire to truly motivate employees look for opportunities for empowerment by encouraging them to express opinions and contribute to the work process (Musselwhite, 2007). Wang and Bird (2011) reported employees who were encouraged to problem solve were given guidelines along with an understanding of working parameters in order to achieve the desired results. Allowing employees to discover answers to their own questions fostered motivation and increased knowledge. Anderson (2013) posited that by executing their responsibilities and duties each day, employees gain an in-depth understanding of their roles qualifying them to be competent to solve problems in order to make the job more efficient. The employees have a better understanding of how to solve problems to

make their jobs more efficient. Therefore, managers who empower their employees to problem solve help the company save money by leaning on the experience of the employees.

### *Trust*

Third, Musselwhite (2007) reported that building trust between managers and employees is essential. When employers are less concerned about the employees and more concerned about the work and productivity, employees begin to feel unimportant. When the personnel reported that their superiors genuinely cared, they were happier with their work and strove to perform at their highest potential. Wang and Bird (2011) reported that principals who develop deep, open meaningful relationships with their employees are also supportive of their staffs' career advancement and professional development. Spending time getting to know each employee is beneficial to a manager. Knowing each individual helps gain insight into what motivates such a person. Everyone is motivated differently. One perceives more of an accomplishment when he or she heads up a project while another gains a sense of achievement when actively involved in completing it. Musselwhite emphasized that getting to know each employee personally demonstrates true concern that leads to increased trust in management and builds self-motivation within employees.

### *The Role as Coach*

Fourth, managers view themselves as coaches. Acting as a coach or mentor, the manager provides the support needed so that the employee is empowered to independently accomplish a given task. Often managers struggle at holding back the urge to quickly provide answers or to bark out orders. Managers who take on the role of a coach value and understand the importance of guiding and providing resources for employees to discover answers to their own questions.



Empowered employees are more independent and confident in their own abilities if they were able to problem solve for themselves; therefore, problem solving helped increase their motivation (Musselwhite, 2007).

### *Positive Interactions*

Fifth, managers are cautioned not to fall into the routine of meeting with and listening to employees only when a problem arises. It is a natural reaction to focus on what is not working. A common trait in a manager is to identify the problem, determine solutions to fix the problem, and then execute a plan to eliminate the problem. Conversing with employees only during difficult situations creates a sense of fear in employees that leads to a perceived threat (Musselwhite, 2007). Brain research reveals that chronic stress impairs an individual's ability to distinguish important information from what is insignificant (Jensen, 2005). A manager discovers work problems by scheduling regular meetings with employees. Specific time set aside to talk allows opportunity to discuss work successes and self-achievement as well as the work struggles. Challenging tasks and difficult encounters are revealed while talking freely about work production. Employees begin to view these meetings as positive experiences. Appreciation for the leader increases and employees begin to look forward to spending time with the manager. They are more motivated when the working environment is emotionally safe and supportive (Musselwhite, 2007).

### *Recognition*

Finally, acknowledging employees' accomplishments assists in promoting their motivation. According to Musselwhite (2007) public recognition is needed so that a person's accomplishment results in a sense of duty and accountability. Self-achievement is empowering

to an employee. Public recognition of success allows employees to relive again the excitement and feelings of accomplishment. This in turn creates a desire to work even harder. Giving additional responsibility or advancement is rewarding after achieving success and also motivates employees. Appropriate recognition for success is essential for employees and for the growth of an organization (Musselwhite, 2007).

### *Political Influence on Education*

Education has always been an important issue in the eyes of the American people. Up until the mid 1900s most viewed public education as doing an adequate job while others said that schools were below standards and declining (Vietvu, 2002). Howard and Parker (2009) reported that 52% of Americans polled in 2000 expressed that public education was in crisis. The educational system has also been viewed as a target or an easy scapegoat. The launching of Russia's satellite Sputnik ignited the idea that American schools were not preparing the U.S. to remain a global leader. The perceived crisis inspired the U.S. to establish the National Defense Education Act that increased funds for education, specifically targeting science and math. Education in America has been blamed for everything from failing to keep teens off the streets to an inadequately trained work force (Vietvu, 2002). In April of 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report entitled *A Nation at Risk*. This report was the spark that ignited a nation-wide reform making education a permanent issue on the national agenda. It was a major issue in almost every presidential campaign since. The report revealed the need to revamp curriculum standards, raise the expectations for student performance, extend instructional time, and strengthen teacher training and professional growth. Aggressive actions were taken by federal and state officials to establish goals that addressed this urgent need of attention (Finn, 2003; Finn, Manno, & Vanourek, 2001).

After *A Nation at Risk* report was released, presidential administrations have continued the education reform crusade through legislative decisions. The latest federal initiatives were Goals 2000, the No Child Left Behind Act, and Race to the Top. National educational goals are focused on a variety of topics such as creating national academic standards, establishing accountability systems, increasing student achievement, and improving teacher effectiveness (Long, 2012; Meier, 1995). Many in the field of education have voiced the opinion that in spite of all the educational reform efforts there is very little evidence of educational improvements (Chubb et al., 2003; Hatrick, 2010; Katzman, 2012).

One area in school reform that has received much attention has been teacher effectiveness. Chubb et al. (2003) wrote that improving schools depends on the provision of highly qualified teachers. Several approaches have been taken to improve teacher effectiveness such as increased salaries and stricter regulation of teacher preparation. One approach thought to improve teacher effectiveness was through teacher empowerment. Studies have been conducted to better understand the relationship between teachers who are empowered and teacher effectiveness (Anderson, 2013; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Enderline-Lampe, 2002; Johnson & Short, 1994; Rinehart & Short, 1994).

### *Empowerment Defined*

Education reform has resulted in school administrators who are willing to share power and responsibilities with teachers in an effort to improve teacher performance and effectiveness. It is important to first understand the meaning of empowerment. Rinehart and Short (1993) defined empowerment as occasions where a person can sovereignly choose, accept obligation, and share in the decision-making processes. Hoy and Miskel (2012) further defined teacher empowerment as the practice whereby administrators allocate power and encourage or assist

teachers to use it in ways that benefit themselves and their profession. A dominant theme of school administrators and reformers has been that of empowering teachers. Empowerment has often been translated into shared decision-making, teamwork, delegation of authority, and professional growth. According to Short et al. (1994) empowerment has been the practice whereby school members cultivate the knowledge to oversee their own professional development and settle their own difficulties. Johnson and Short (1994) supported the idea that the main focus behind empowerment in the field of education was teacher effectiveness. When educators are recognized as professionals and given the responsibility to make decisions that create and design the curriculum as well as establish improvement initiatives that affect the total program, administrators see teachers who are more committed, participate in collaborative efforts, accept and support change, begin to take ownership, value program goals, and desire to seek out areas of weakness in order to grow professionally (Johnson & Short; Short).

### *Decision-Making*

The work of Herzberg on understanding what motivates employees has influenced today's school culture (Musselwhite, 2007). According to Kitsantas and Ware (2007) when employees were empowered through motivation the organization saw less personnel burnout and more of a commitment to excellence. Anderson (2013) said that when empowered employees know that their ideas matter, they have a stronger sense of responsibility, and are capable of making decisions that result in a more efficiently run business because of the level of knowledge and skills required for the job. Being a part of the decision-making process is a vital part of empowerment and is referred to as shared leadership or shared governance. According to Olson (2009) shared governance implies a collaborative effort between administrative responsibility and staff participation in decision-making opportunities. Employees who are empowered and

share leadership responsibilities are more committed to the organization's purpose or mission and are more willing to follow and accept guidance from the administration. Educational leaders faced with productivity concerns investigated and implemented empowerment strategies and shared leadership opportunities within academic programs (Hoy & Miskel, 2012; Johnson & Short, 1994).

Two concerns were revealed about empowerment from teachers' perception. The first concern was the amount of time that teachers were given to plan and to collaborate with each other (Berry, Fuller, & Williams, 2008; Short, 1994). Short described the work environment as teachers who were isolated from each other. Berry et al. reported that time was the biggest concern of teacher working conditions. Time was the major issue for collaboration and documentation. The second issue was that teachers had little to almost no say in decisions that were directly related to their work (Berry et al.; Short). In school systems that were based on empowerment, teachers were recognized as having acquired the knowledge, ability, and skills needed to solve problems and to make decisions. Short defined empowerment as a process where individuals acquire the knowledge and ability to control their own professional growth and assume responsibility of making decisions that significantly affect a program's direction. Short reported that individuals who feel empowered are confident of their own ability to respond appropriately to a given circumstance. School systems that support empowerment provide ways for educators to display knowledge and skills as well as opportunities for further understanding. Berry et al. wrote a report that summarized the responses to the Mississippi Project CLEAR Voice Teacher Working Conditions Survey. According to the report, teachers' strongly disagreed with administrators that teachers are central to decision-making. Short (1996)

suggested that the reasons for the concern were due to historical development and the bureaucratic structure of schools.

### *Dimensions of Empowerment*

Short (1996) named six dimensions that together provide a more in-depth description and understanding of teacher empowerment: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact. These different aspects were identified from research conducted on school empowerment in nine school districts across the country from 1989 to 1992.

#### *Decision-Making*

The first dimension, decision-making, refers to the level of participation of teachers in decisions that are directly related to their work. When teachers are provided the opportunity to play a more influential role in the decision-making process, they impact more than just classroom activities and methodology. Teachers also influence budgeting, curriculum, scheduling, and teacher selection. At this level of involvement teachers are more prone to take responsibility for the decisions they make. The more teachers are directly connected to student learning, the more the teachers indicate they should be held responsible for their work.

Before entering this level of participation, teachers had to have faith and trust that their opinions were valued and essential to students and program success. Enderline-Lampe (2002) said that teachers are not clear as to what is expected of them in the decision-making process. Short (1996) indicated that administrators and principals have been partly responsible for shaping and creating the school climate. Educational climates that support empowerment reflect an open environment, one in which teachers are safe to take risks and encouraged to experiment with new ideas and approaches. Frustration quickly sets in when teachers' opinions are

disregarded. When teachers' thoughts or suggestions were ignored, they voiced that they were viewed as lacking the skills or knowledge needed to make good decisions. Situations such as this have led to low self-esteem, low commitment, and minimal student impact. Enderlin-Lampe (2002) suggested that there may be teachers who are not interested in becoming involved in the decision-making process. She questioned where does the power and authority for making decisions start and stop for teachers. A knowledge base or training may be needed prior to making a risky decision. Poor decisions based on faulty thinking can be made just as easily from teachers as from administrators. Short (1996) said that being a part of the decision-making process requires trusting that teachers possess the skills and knowledge to make good sound decisions. When teachers are viewed as professionals and are welcome to participate in active leadership roles that directly impact educational decisions, their self-efficacy increases. Also, involving them in crucial choices is just one aspect of teacher empowerment.

### *Professional Growth*

Professional growth is another dimension of empowerment according to Short (1994) and refers to the teachers' perceptions of opportunities the school provides for their personal growth and development. Professional development is impacted by the teachers' ability to share as well as to expand their skills and knowledge. Short added that presenters at educator workshops and conventions are also a way for teachers to share their knowledge with others and at the same time serves to increase confidence and build self-esteem. Professional growth is partially dependent on self-assessment. Empowered teachers realize that evaluating and assessing progress is necessary for personal growth and development. Students are directly affected by such empowerment. Short stated that empowered teachers desire to grow professionally;

therefore, activities and teaching methods improve that directly affect the students' educational experience and performance. One aspect of teacher empowerment is professional growth.

### *Status*

Short (1994) stated that status is another dimension of empowerment that refers to the admiration and professional respect an individual perceives to have earned from other colleagues. How a teacher is viewed in the eyes of his or her peers plays a major role in building a healthy sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. Short also found when teachers indicate that their skills, input, and expertise are recognized and supported by their peers, they are more willing to contribute and collaborate over program details.

### *Self-Efficacy*

Self-efficacy as a dimension of empowerment refers to the teacher's belief that he or she has the skills, knowledge, and ability to create effective programs that impact student learning. Bogler and Somech (2004) said the dimension of self-efficacy refers to the teachers' belief that they are personally competent to effect change. Teachers reported that they possessed the skills and ability to impact change in students. They acquired the knowledge to establish programs that affected student learning. Bogler and Somech stated that in order to increase teacher self-efficacy it is essential that teachers feel they are proficient in their knowledge and practice. Enderlin-Lampe (2002) agreed that teachers must recognize and believe that they can cause change in school programs and student learning. She wrote that teachers need to believe that "they have the capacity and power to make key decisions which will affect their role and students' production" (p. 3). Enderlin-Lampe reported that the major key to successful school reform was to focus on increasing and sustaining a teacher's sense of efficacy. Not only did



teachers need to feel competent, but it was also essential that they felt supported. Enderline-Lampe (2002) viewed teacher efficacy from an ecological perspective. Several environmental issues such as past training, administration, peers, and the community's characteristics each played a role in teacher efficacy. Short (1994) said that self-efficacy begins to develop as an individual acquires knowledge and begins to believe he or she has mastered the necessary skills to be effective. Short indicated that teachers' sense of self-efficacy directly relates to their decisions to remain as educational instructors. Student performance is also connected to teachers' belief about professional abilities. Self-doubt creeps in when teachers continually faced evolving educational methods, arbitrary criticism or lack of administrative, and peer support. Self-doubt smothers self-efficacy. When instructional decisions are found to be effective and impact student learning, confidence in self-performance increases, which fosters teacher self-efficacy.

### *Autonomy*

Autonomy is another dimension of empowerment. An individual's desire to choose what to do and how to do it is known as autonomy or self-determination. Directing one's own life and setting one's own rules emanates from within each human being (Kitsantas & Ware, 2007; Nir & Kranot, 2006; Short, 1994). The desire for independent thought and action has been considered as a basic need. Teachers desire to have some control over decisions that relate to them and the work environment. Teachers need to manage their own environments and to set their own rules and conditions. The teachers' ability to regulate certain factors of the work environment such as instructional methods, program scheduling or curriculum is referred to as autonomy (Short). Bogler and Somech (2004) wrote that when teachers feel autonomous they have the freedom to make decisions that relate to their educational environment. Pellicer and Anderson (1995) said

that teachers want the freedom to make decisions and to have complete control of the classroom. Although teachers have been given freedoms, they still cannot be given free reign to do whatever they please regardless of the consequences. Pellicer and Anderson pointed out that autonomy has sometimes been viewed as a two-edged sword. On the one hand, some teachers enjoy the freedom to control the classroom and keep others out. They resent administrators coming in or offering suggestions. But on the other hand, these teachers are quick to complain that no one seems to care about them. No one knows what they are doing or what is happening in the classroom. They describe themselves as being isolated or alienated. Pellicer and Anderson pose the questions how much freedom and responsibility should a teacher have and how much control should an administrator maintain? The goal in developing autonomy has been to establish a balance between freedom and responsibilities for teachers or administrators.

Teachers are often limited in what areas they control. They sometimes report a lack of any form of control whatsoever. Internal emotions such as guilt and shame or external forces such as rules, regulations, orders, and deadlines have produced feelings of a diminishing autonomy (Hoy & Miskel, 2012). Sometimes the desire for autonomy is so overwhelming that an outside offer of assistance is completely rejected. A strong force of resistance emerges when individuals see themselves as game pieces being manipulated by others (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). As a result, the joy of working greatly diminishes and work becomes more of an obligation. In this kind of working environment, employees are extrinsically instead intrinsically motivated. When teachers view themselves as pawns, they tend to have lower self-esteem, feel less competent, and take less responsibility for their work (Keiser & Shen, 2000).

Short (1994) urged administrators to build teachers' sense of autonomy by encouraging risk taking and experimentation. Short supported the premise that autonomy is a major

component in building a sense of accomplishment. Allington et al. (2011) conducted a nationwide study that focused on factors that influenced teacher development. One of the top three factors identified as influencing teacher development and effectiveness was a sense of engaged autonomy. According to the study engaged autonomy is described as situations where teachers are given some freedom but are not left to fend for themselves. In this study, 30 exemplary fourth grade teachers worked in high poverty elementary schools and were asked to describe factors that influenced their professional development. The research reported that some teachers were encouraged to try new things such as a new teaching method or a unique activity. New devices or strategies that seemed not to be beneficial were viewed as a learning opportunity instead of a failure. Teachers were asked to voice their opinions and to share their knowledge with other educators that fostered the feelings of independence while still maintaining a sense of collaboration. Teachers who experienced engaged autonomy described their administrator as an instructional leader, one who provided positive feedback and treated teachers as professionals. The administrator challenged and stretched them but also collaborated with them. As a result, teachers expressed that they did not feel isolated but connected to the rest of the school. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers who described the administrator as being low supportive also indicated how it was a privilege to make their own decisions. Teachers expressed that they were left to do their own thing. In an environment where supervision was minimal, teachers still found ways to collaborate with other colleagues and to try new things. Regardless of whether the administrator was viewed as high supportive or low supportive, teachers expressed that students' academic success was their responsibility. No matter the level of administrative involvement, exemplary teachers found ways to engage in autonomous situations in order to improve student learning (Allington et al., 2011).

Estrom (2009) stated that administrators who have been reluctant to allow freedom should understand that autonomy is necessary for teachers who in turn shape the educational environment of the school. Estrom reported that a national survey of school personnel conducted by the U.S. Department of education in 2000-2001 stated that one of the top reasons for teachers' leaving the profession was due to a lack of freedom to offer a voice in decisions that affected teaching and student achievement. Allington et al. (2011) indicated that autonomy is essential to the professional development of teachers. School leaders and educators have worked to find a balance between freedom to voice opinions and the liberty to try new things while at the same time involving the administrator in offering guidance and support. The findings of the research study indicated that administrators who accept the role of facilitator and encourage engaged autonomy ultimately increase teacher effectiveness which in turned increases student learning. Teacher autonomy; therefore, is important and needs to be understood as it relates to teacher empowerment.

### *Impact*

Short's (1994) final dimension of empowerment is impact that refers to teachers' belief that they do influence and impact student learning. Motivation and self-esteem increases when teachers see that their work makes a difference and is recognized by the administrator, other colleagues, and parents. Feedback is vitally important to teachers' perception that they are having an impact on student learning. Schleicher (2011) supported the importance of feedback and appraisals to teacher impact based on an international survey. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development conducted the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in 2007 – 2008 to better understand the importance of teacher feedback. More than 70,000 lower secondary teachers and their school principals in 23 countries, representing a

workforce of more than 2 million teachers were surveyed. A report was released with its findings. Schleicher reported that one of the areas of focus was to gain an understanding of teachers' perception about feedback and appraisal they do or do not receive.

Schleicher (2007) wrote that the TALIS survey report revealed that there was a change in the role of school evaluations. In the past evaluations consisted of simply the administrator ensuring that policies and procedures were being followed. Due to state and federal mandates school evaluations have shifted more towards school accountability and school improvement. Some systems publicize school evaluations in order to promote school choice. When evaluations are made public parents can choose which school will better meet the needs of their children. From a school improvement viewpoint evaluations have been informative for meeting school objectives and professional development. Appraisals and feedback provide additional information used to increase teacher impact. Teachers reported that appraisals and feedback led to improved teaching skills. Public recognition also contributed to higher levels of teachers' self-efficacy. The survey also revealed that school evaluations and teacher appraisal and feedback are seldom being conducted. According to the survey results one in five teachers worked in a school that had not conducted a self-evaluation in the last 5 years. On average, 13% of teachers received no appraisal and feedback on their work. More recently, the main objective of school evaluations has been aimed at teacher accountability. Teachers are responsible to ensure that students are learning. Appraisals and feedback help teachers improve the quality of instruction. They provide information on teaching objectives that have been mastered and the method used to teach them. Evaluations along with appraisal and feedback are designed to improve the development and impact of schools and teachers (Schleicher, 2011).

Based on the results of the TALIS study more than four out of five teachers reported that the feedback they received was fair (Schleicher, 2011). Korea was the only country where the percentage fell below 60%. More than 75% of teachers felt that the feedback they received was helpful for their work. The report supported the teachers' view that appraisal and feedback contributed to their development and teaching skills within schools. The majority of teachers reported that the feedback they received increased their job satisfaction and their development as teachers and either increased or did not affect their job security. Teachers' positive response to job satisfaction and job security were important especially because feedback and appraisal were linked to teacher accountability. The TALIS study revealed that the appraisal and feedback that teachers received were reflected in the understanding of their own teaching abilities. This data supported the finding that a teacher's confidence would increase when more feedback was given. Teachers expressed that the appraisal and feedback aided them in improving their teaching skills and led to changes in specific aspects of their teaching (Schleicher).

The TALIS report not only alleviated the fears of teachers about evaluations but also supported the teachers' perception that their work had a positive impact. The report supported the belief that school evaluation and teacher appraisal and feedback can be a valuable means of acquiring constructive and informative data that can be used to contribute to teacher development and school improvement (Schleicher, 2011).

An understanding of Short's six dimensions of empowerment provided information that could help school leaders rethink their role and the role of teachers. The combined efforts of administrators and teachers working toward the same goals resulted in an increase in personal development, motivation, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness. Empowered teachers

under the guidance of administrators played an active part in causing positive school reform (Cerit, 2009; Choudhary et al., 2012; DeFlaminis & O'Toole, 2009; Hawkins, 2009).

### *Foundations of Empowerment*

Stone (1995) identified the beginning steps of teacher empowerment to be respect, validation, and success. The first step is respect. Leaders of bureaucratic school systems typically view teachers as lacking the skills and motivation to cause change; however, empowered teachers are viewed and respected as professional individuals who have the knowledge and ability to contribute to the change process. Second, validation is an important tool that is needed when change occurs (Stone, 1995). With the increase in stress that teachers experience, it is important that school leaders provide meaningful support. Validation is recognizing and accepting an individual's work. Knowing that ideas and concerns are validated opens up new doors of communication and instills a sense of purpose and value (Hall, 2012; National Association of School Psychologists, 2009). Finally, everyone desires to be seen as being successful. According to Fin (2003) the media constantly report criticism of America's educational system for its perceived shortcomings. This negative perception echoes in the minds of America's teachers. Too often the focus is on areas that need to be strengthened instead of recognizing teachers' accomplishments. Educational leaders help teachers build performance by bringing attention to their strengths. Once a positive foundation is established through respect, validation, and a focus on success, the following methods strengthen the foundation of empowering teachers (Stone).

First, there is a sense of ownership. Stone (1995) said that teachers begin to take ownership when they recognize that their work is valued and is essential to student achievement as well as school effectiveness. Ownership gives teachers the feeling of belonging and making a

difference. Choices are another area that build empowerment. Enderlin-Lampe (2002) said that leaders strengthen empowerment in teachers by allowing them to make choices about curriculum, resources, teaching strategies, and even staff. If there is an opening on an academic team, it is beneficial to the students for the members of the team to participate in the interviewing process. Autonomy is another thread that strengthens empowerment. Just as teachers desire students to be autonomous learners, principals who value empowerment also encourage teachers to move further toward self-direction. This in turn builds confidence. Finally, decision-making is another important aspect of empowerment. When teachers are given the power to make critical decisions that directly affect their work they view themselves as active participants in determining direction. These methods help teachers view their work as being meaningful, which boosts motivation. Research (Bogler & Somech, 2004; Enderline-Lampe) indicates that teachers have a desire to participate in shared decisions and restructuring a schools' education. Teachers who report support from administration and coworkers exhibit a positive work attitude and describe a more favorable working environment. The schools' structure begins to take on a different shape when teachers are intrinsically motivated.

### *Characteristics of Empowered Teachers*

Stone (1995) identified five characteristics that emerge when teachers are truly empowered. First, empowered teachers accept responsibility for the decisions that directly affect their work. Allington et al. (2011) conducted a survey and reported that teachers who were empowered desired to seek ways to improve their practices. The work itself was very meaningful to the teachers. Second, Stone said that teachers who were independent by being given the power to make their own decisions exhibited a higher degree of independence. Teachers relied less on the opinions of the principal and more on their own beliefs and



understanding. Independence increased through the encouragement of the principal. Allington et al. reported that teachers who were empowered felt free to make decisions. Third, Stone said that an empowered teacher is willing to be a risk taker. The teacher has the freedom to experiment with what works and what does not work. Failure is viewed as a growing period and just another learning experience. Fourth, a collaborative spirit emerges from teachers who are empowered. There is less competition and more team effort. Teachers feel safe about expressing their own thoughts and ideas as well as seeking the same from others. Allington et al. reported that teachers greatly benefited from exchanging ideas and reflecting out loud. Finally, Stone suggested that empowered teachers recognize the importance of assessing set goals in order to create new ones. Teachers' desire for professional growth increases when they take on more of the responsibility for making decisions. This leads to an increased desire to evaluate and assess progress. Schleicher (2011) reported that 80% of teachers in a research study indicated that their appraisal and feedback were helpful in developing their work as teachers. Responsible, independent, risk-taker, collaborator, and self-evaluator are characteristics that reflect an empowered teacher. The level of empowerment and the roles that teachers assume depend on the style of school leadership.

Educational studies over the years have focused on understanding the role of leadership within an organization (Creekmore, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hollingworth, 2012; Jason, 2000; Mahmook et al., 2012; Onorato, 2013; Parris & Peachey, 2012; Portin, Alejano, Knapp, & Marzolf, 2006; Sherer, 2008). Administrators and principals have always played a major role in education; however, society's expectations of these positions have drastically changed over the last couple of decades. Rinehart and Short (1993) pointed out that the leaders of self-managing teachers were just as important as those found in traditional structured school systems; however,

their responsibilities greatly differed. Those in administration were mainly viewed as individuals who managed the day-to-day operations. Everyday tasks included overseeing the yearly budget, purchasing materials and equipment, hiring faculty, and maintaining the grounds and building. According to Creekmore these responsibilities began to change as the focus of educational reform turned toward increased student achievement and shared governance. State and federal mandates were partly responsible for the administration's role shifting from management to leadership. Even though managerial skills were still needed, administrators and principals were viewed as leaders having great influence in the development of students in a similar way as teachers. Decisions emanating from educational leadership directly or indirectly affected students whether hiring staff, changing curriculum, building safety, or creating faculty schedules. Professional growth of faculty was in direct proportion to decisions made by the school administration. Portin et al. reported that the education reform context implies that leadership needs to be aimed at specific key outcome goals instead of focusing on technical management. Because of new legislature and directives administrators and principals are now accountable for what happens inside as well as outside the classroom.

Educational reform movements have focused attention on the leadership styles of school administrators and principals. Research has been conducted to investigate the effects of leadership on student performance, teacher effectiveness, and overall success of the school program. The information gleaned from research will benefit school leaders as they face the challenge of leading schools toward improvements (Du et al., 2012; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Jason, 2000; Leithwood & Louis, 2004; Onorato, 2013; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Weathers, 2011; Wise & Hammack, 2011).

The responsibilities of school leaders have been compared to the duties of corporate leaders in the business world. Mahmook et al. (2012) said that school principals are very similar to managers in that they also oversee personnel, control budgets, set strategic goals, and collaborate with outside forces such as parents, unions, community groups, and political pressures. Effective leaders, when faced with budget constraints, figure out how to provide needed services or materials to sustain the organization. Leaders of educational programs constantly work at ways to trim the budget while at the same time try to find ways to increase teacher resources and professional development. Onorato (2013) wrote that principals are aware of the importance of motivating teachers to work harder but at the same time reduce spending. Just as CEOs look for an increase in productivity, principals look for an increase in student and teacher achievements. Because of the pressures and the demands of current society, principals are expected to perform in a similar way as managers do in private industries.

### *Transformational Leadership*

A great number of research studies have focused on the effects of transformational leadership style and organizational success (Jason, 2000; King, 2012; Onorato, 2013). Onorato reported that transformational leadership has become popular among school leaders. This style of leadership focuses on influencing variables that affect student learning such as the environment, curriculum, and interpersonal relationships. Transformational leaders strive to achieve program goals through encouragement, motivation, and inspiration. Northouse (2012) wrote that James MacGregor Burns is responsible for establishing this important approach to leadership. Burns identified two types of leadership: transactional and transformational. Transactional leaders provided rewards and assistance in return for effort. This style of leadership was typically associated with position power, status, and influence that originate from

one's rank in the hierarchy. Burns described transformational leaders as individuals who motivate the followers for the purpose of achieving the goals of the leaders and followers. The goal is to engage with the followers to create a connection that increases the level of motivation. The leader not only wants the follower to complete a task but to be motivated to go beyond the task in order to achieve his or her fullest potential (Northouse, 2012). For example, principals expect more from teachers than simply covering a curriculum. Transformational leaders also desire that teachers discover new strategies that still accomplish the same goals. Teachers who are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone are more risk takers and view challenges as a way of furthering their professional development (Jason, 2000).

Liebowitz (1998) condensed the definition of the transactional approach in one sentence, "If you do your job well, I will reward you for it" (p. 14). Making rewards dependent on performance was not bad but was viewed more as a manipulative negative approach. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, does not depend on position. Liebowitz identified six components that are associated with becoming a transformational leader: vision, charisma, values, strong culture, oversee systems, and energy.

Initially, a leader's vision is considered to be essential to the success of an organization. Such a vision should be clear, straightforward, noble, and dramatic – an inspiring vision that all employees could rally around (Liebowitz, 1998).

Secondly, charisma is something that could be developed. Liebowitz (1998) said it was contagious enthusiasm. Charismatic people are viewed as confident, positive, eloquent, fervent, forward, and likeable. Charisma is seen as the main drive for causing great change within an organization.

Thirdly, instilling core values is thought to be very important. Organizations need to be value-driven. To be the best of the best in their particular industry is one example of desired values. Other businesses may value people, products, profits, growth, and customers. Transformational leaders are aware of the values that have been instilled within a company (Liebowitz, 1998).

Fourthly, one of the leaders' most important tasks is to create a strong organizational culture. Transformational leaders are able to inspire and energize their employees. They have been described as having a great deal of faith and trust in their people. When a leader displays so much concern and care, the followers are willing to work extraordinarily hard. When leaders establish a culture in which the needs of the employees are valued, then leaders and followers work harmoniously together toward the same objectives (Liebowitz, 1998).

Liebowitz's (1998) fifth component is that transformational leaders oversee systems. Leaders need to manage the implementation of systems, practices, procedures, and policies that reinforce the organization's values. For example, the main purpose and goal for any business is signified by its mission statement; not simply a sentence printed on a brochure or on the bottom of the company's stationery. The focus of everything from hiring new employees and purchasing curriculum to setting up the environment must reflect the school's purpose or mission. Transformational leaders understand the importance of acquiring and maintaining efficient managerial competences.

Energy is the final component in being a transformational leader. Such leaders sacrifice in a number of ways; financially, in order to invest in employee benefits to meet their personal as well as employment needs. Leaders sacrifice time by building positive relationships with followers to encourage personal growth and morale. Prioritizing company needs may be based

on policy and procedures or on what employees need in order to function more efficiently. This style of leadership requires an enormous amount of energy; however, the benefits significantly outweigh the necessary sacrifices (Liebowitz, 1998).

Transformational leaders are committed to a vision and to their values both of which are communicated time and time again to the followers. These leaders understand the need for excellent management abilities and value the importance of creating a caring culture. Great energy is required to accomplish such a vision. Liebowitz (1998) strongly urged leaders to embrace the transformational approach by adopting these components.

Another area that has been a focus in educational research on leadership is the effects of transformational leadership on teachers' self-efficacy. Kurt et al. (2012) conducted a research study that focused on the causal relationship mechanisms among principal leadership, teacher self-efficacy, and collective efficacy. Questionnaires were sent to 813 primary school teachers. The findings of the study showed that collective efficacy and transformation leadership together shape teachers' self-efficacy. This study also indicated that there was not a significant relationship between transactional leadership and teacher self-efficacy. When principals showed respect and confidence in their teachers, not only did teachers' beliefs about themselves increase, but teachers' trust and loyalty to the principal also increased (Kurt et al., 2012).

Transformational leadership has also been positively linked to job satisfaction. In 2004 a study conducted in Turkey surveyed teachers at 46 high schools. Questionnaires were sent to 875 teachers, 630 of which were returned. The study investigated to what extent the differences in school health could be related to the principal's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction. The most significant finding was that transformational leadership had a profound impact on teachers' job satisfaction. The study also suggested that transformational leadership style and

teachers' job satisfaction may have both been factors that affected school health. This study encouraged principals to value the importance of helping promote positive attitudes in teachers toward their profession. As a result teachers were more committed and their effectiveness increased if they worked in a healthy environment and had a high level of job satisfaction (Korkmaz, 2007).

According to Onorato (2013) how a principal chooses to lead negatively or positively impacts every aspect of the school's program. The ways in which individuals respond to one another and to situations are influenced by the principal's leadership. Principals who respect and value their teachers tend to create nurturing environments. Hallinger (2003) wrote that around the 1990s transformational leadership was thought to be the ideal model for promoting school change. Research studies (Choudhary et al., 2012; Du et al., 2012) indicated that transformational leadership had greater impact on the overall school program than other styles of leadership. Transformational leadership continues to be examined and used in comparison to other leadership styles.

### *Servant Leadership*

A leadership style that gained attention in the area of research and education has been servant leadership. Parris and Peachey (2012) said this style of leadership emphasizes the importance of the leader serving the employees in order to achieve an organization's goal "to create a people who can build a better tomorrow" (p. 378). Leadership has been a popular research topic mainly because of its impact on economics, politics, and the organizational systems. Even though servant leadership was established in the 1970s, decades later it has received attention due to the increasing perception that corporate leaders have become selfish

and because this leadership style may better address the needs and demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Parris & Peachey, 2012).

Robert K. Greenleaf (1977) was responsible for developing servant leadership as a theory. His main premise was that one must be willing to serve others before becoming a successful leader. When a servant leader predominantly focuses on addressing the needs of the employees, the organization will be prosperous because the employees are prosperous. A servant leader also values the importance of building a sense of trust with those who are following. Leaders who struggle with establishing trust among employees find it difficult to influence change. Parris and Peachey (2012) wrote that other skills that are associated with servant leadership are empathy and a sense of what is happening around one's self. Servant leaders tend to concentrate their time in two areas: what is transpiring right now and what are the plans for the future. Servant leaders view the decision-making process as a requirement for a leadership position. Because employees interpret such decisions based on experiences and knowledge, it is essential for servant leaders to clearly explain the intent or the meaning of each decision so that everyone reaches the same conclusion. Servant leaders value the positive relationships with their employees. Greenleaf (1977) suggested that employees were more committed to their leader when the leader's focus was on the employees.

Servant leadership has also been viewed as an inappropriate style of leadership. Jim Heskett (2013), a Baker Foundation Professor Emeritus in the Graduate school of Business Administration at Harvard University, became interested in this leadership approach after learning that psychologists were trying to measure the impact of servant leadership on leaders and not just on those being led. Heskett researched the topic to better understand why the Greenleaf's approach was not more common if it was as effective as some had claimed. Heskett



revealed thoughts and opinions that were to some extent opposed to the view that servant leadership was an effective style of leadership. Based on his findings servant leadership was characterized as “a Utopian approach that requires a complete paradigm shift for most modern day employees at any level” (p. 2). This form of leadership may have been uncommon because it necessitated rare qualities such as prime virtues. Servant leadership was described as being fulfilling but also exhausting. Some viewed the practice of serving others as being a weakness. Heskett claimed that when Greenleaf spoke about servant leaders, the focus was not on leaders being servants but how leaders served. Even though there were negative opinions of this approach, it continued to gain attention and consideration in the research field of leadership (Heskett, 2013).

Servant leadership among principals has been researched to determine its effectiveness with teachers and organizations (Cerit, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2012; Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011; Salameh, 2011). Two specific studies focused on the effects of servant leadership behavior of primary school principals on teacher job satisfaction. Cerit said that employees with high job satisfaction tended to contribute more and to work harder. In this respect, satisfied teachers were more passionate and enthusiastic about student learning and were willing to spend more time and energy educating students. Identifying factors that contributed to teacher satisfaction was valuable because of the positive effects on student learning and success. Therefore, because a principal’s leadership behavior was a factor in job satisfaction, servant leadership was researched to measure the effects on teacher satisfaction. Results indicated that there was a strong positive relationship between servant leadership behaviors of school principals and teachers’ job satisfaction and servant leadership was a significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction. Salameh reported that principals who were trained in servant leadership skills had

the potential to greatly influence teacher job satisfaction. Understanding the influence of servant leadership also impacted how principals viewed their role as a leader. Servant leadership continues to be studied to gain a better understanding of its effects on the quality of education.

### *Distributive Leadership*

Another style of leadership that has gained popularity has been known as the distributive theory. Policy and mandated pressures to improve school effectiveness and student performance have fallen on school leaders. In addition to managerial tasks, principals were also expected to take the role of an instructional leader (Sherer, 2008). Because of the greatness of this responsibility, often leadership has been allocated to other individuals. Principals typically were viewed as having the power; therefore, using distributive leadership impacted the power relationships within a school (DeFlaminis & O'Toole, 2009).

Distributive leadership is less focused on the authority one might possess and more on what one does with that authority. When the school principal extends leadership opportunities to other people, the power associated with the school principal also extends to other people. The understanding that the school's leadership resides in a person or a position has now been challenged (Sherer, 2008). Harris and Spillane (2008) said that the distributive leadership supports the understanding that there were multiple leaders. It focuses on the relationship between people instead of the responses of those in formal and informal leadership roles. Principals who embrace distributive leadership willingly pass power and responsibilities over to other principals, teachers, and even parents. The school is made up of a wide variety of roles some formally defined such as principal while other roles are more informally defined such as lead math teacher. A distributive leader recognizes the work of all people who influenced leadership practice. This approach to leadership has been also known as group-centered, shared

leadership, dispersed leadership, and participatory leadership. School leaders have begun to value this form of leadership because it reflects the modifications that are observed in the leadership practices in schools today (Naicker & Mestry, 2011). Schools have been restructured to incorporate leadership teams in order to improve effectiveness and student performance. According to Harris and Spillane schools that establish conditions that support collaboration among staff will demand the implementation of distributed leadership in order to achieve broader input and to gain multiple perspectives. Principals have addressed the complex changes in new school structures through acquiring a diverse type of expertise and leadership flexibility.

Sherer (2008) conducted a case study to examine the effects of leadership practices on empowered teachers and student learning. Data were gathered through interviews, shadows, meeting observations, classroom observations, and surveys. The results supported the belief that leaders and followers frequently exchanged roles. Formal leaders encouraged teachers to step into leadership opportunities. The most active followers were often the ones who stepped into leadership roles. Teachers expressed the feeling that they had ideas to contribute and were viewed as professionals. Teachers were also able to influence others when participating in leadership opportunities. Relinquishing the responsibilities from the principal can build trust among the staff. Teachers had more power over classroom practices and student learning. Principals thought more about how to build and support school structures that would empower teachers. Teachers focused on how to invite others to lead. Teachers realized that they could actively participate and that their participation was valued. Although much was gained through this research, it was recommended that further study be conducted to determine the impact on student learning (Sherer, 2008).

Harris and Spillane (2008) reported that some researchers claimed that there are limitations and dangers associated with distributive leadership. One concern was how words and meanings were swapped back and forth which led to confusion. Woods, Bennett, Harvey, and Wise (2004) defined distributed as devolved leadership while Kets de Vries (1990) defined it in terms of effective teamworking. Leithwood and Louis (2004) claimed that the concept of distributed leadership overlapped shared collaboration and teacher leadership concepts. Harris and Spillane stated that these links confused the meaning and was viewed as a fancy way of delegating or sharing leadership responsibilities. A second limitation was the conflict between theoretical and practical interpretations. Theoretically, distributed leadership was simply viewed as an abstract way of analyzing leadership practice. Thinking of it in a practical sense, distributed leadership has been merely seen as shared leadership practice. How leadership has been distributed was one area that was not well researched. Evidence has been shown that there are powerful and important benefits of distributive leadership. This approach to leadership has been defined and investigated in order to determine how it impacts a leadership centered school culture.

### *Summary*

The role of school administrators continues to be researched to investigate the impact of teacher empowerment. School principals are the ones responsible for creating an empowered environment. Principals who build an empowered environment value teachers as leaders. Empowered environments may be a way school leaders can address increased expectations and responsibilities. School administrators are evaluating different styles of leadership for greatest effectiveness in creating empowered environments. Empowerment may differ from administration when viewed from a teachers' perspective; however, both have agreed it was

important for school improvement. Working as a team *with* the principal instead of working *for* the principal from isolated classrooms has been significant to teacher empowerment.

Understanding the importance of teacher empowerment is essential in the world of Christian education. The results of the study will assist Christian school leaders in examining teacher empowerment. School leaders who desire to increase school effectiveness know that students can benefit from empowered teachers. Empowered teachers are encouraged to implement or investigate new methodologies which will impact student learning. Teachers who are involved in program decision-making opportunities view their work as being significant and therefore make great strides to improve their work performance. Teachers who are empowered put forth extra effort to ensure every student is successful (Bogler & Somech, 2004).

Teachers also benefit from empowered environments. Empowered teachers accept responsibility for the decisions that affect their work; therefore, their work is more meaningful. Teacher independence increased when they were encouraged to make decisions. Empowered teachers relied less on the opinions of principals and more on their own beliefs and understandings (Johnson & Short, 1994; Nir & Kranot, 2006). Teachers who were empowered exhibited more of a collaborative spirit. Teachers benefited from exchanging ideas and reflecting (Moolenaar et al., 2012). Professional development increased due to empowered teachers continually evaluating goals in order to formulate new ones. Empowered teachers desired to grow professionally. Appraisals and feedbacks were valued and appreciated. School leaders can impact professional development and practice through teacher empowerment (Katzman, 2012; Parsons & Beauchamp, 2012).

Even though empowerment and its level of impact in the field of education continue to be discussed, research supports the idea that teacher empowerment has been a positive influence on

organizational effectiveness (Enderline-Lampe, 2002; Hollingworth, 2012; Keiser & Shen, 2000; Rinehart & Short, 1993).

CHAPTER 3  
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*Introduction*

This study was an examination of the perceptions of teachers regarding their empowerment while working in a Christian educational environment. The researcher collected data on teachers' perceptions related to their teaching responsibilities, training, experiences, affiliation, professional practices as well as student achievement test scores to measure the impact of teacher empowerment on shared decision-making, professional commitment, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and student achievement.

*Research Questions and Corresponding Null Hypotheses*

Through the analysis of surveys, the researcher measured teachers' perceptions of their empowerment while working in a Christian school that is accredited by the Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS). The following research questions and null hypotheses guided this study:

1. Are teacher empowerment scores in leadership and decision making significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?

$H_o1$ : Teacher empowerment scores in leadership and decision making are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.

2. Are teacher empowerment scores in professional practices significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?

$H_o2$ : Teacher empowerment scores in professional practices are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.

3. Are teacher empowerment scores in responsibility for their own professional growth significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?  
 $H_o3$ : Teacher empowerment scores in responsibility for their own professional growth are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.
4. Are teachers' beliefs and experiences significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?  
 $H_o4$ : Teachers' beliefs and experiences concerning empowerment are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.
5. Is there a significant correlation between teacher empowerment scores and their averaged student achievement test scores?  
 $H_o5$ : There is not a significant relationship between teacher scores and their averaged student achievement test scores.

### *Population*

The population for this study was nine Christian schools (K-12) that are accredited by the Tennessee of Association of Christian Schools (TACS). These institutions were chosen due to the high standards required by the accrediting agency, TACS.

The office of Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS) supplied the researcher with a list of schools who are members of TACS. Out of the 41 schools listed, 13 are also accredited by TACS. Each accredited school was contacted by phone and invited to participate in this study. Nine of the 13 accredited schools chose to participate. Out of approximately 300 teachers who were asked to complete a survey, 144 chose to participate.



### *Instrumentation*

This study was an examination of the perceptions of teachers and their empowerment while working in a Christian educational environment. A modified 32 question survey originally created by Virginia Foley (1996) was used in this study. Certain questions from the demographic section were omitted because they did not pertain to this study. The rest of the survey concentrated on teacher leadership and decision-making, professional practices, professional growth, and beliefs and experiences. The survey used a 5-point Likert Scale and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. The instrument was used to collect data on teacher responsibilities, training, experiences, affiliation, and professional practices. The content validity was established through a panel of judges who were selected according to specific criteria. The internal consistency of the Likert scale items was established by Cronbach's coefficient alpha at 88%.

The Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT-10) was also used to collect data. The SAT-10 has been used to scientifically measure academic knowledge of students in grades K-5 through 12. For over 80 years, school administrators have been using this valid and reliable tool to obtain data in order to assess student learning. The test content is aligned to the state as well as the national standards. The SAT 10 is also norm-referenced, which allows for a student's skills to be compared to other students of the same age group. Norm-referenced test scores can be used to determine a young child's readiness, to evaluate basic skills, to identify learning disabilities, or to make program eligibility or college admission decisions (Pearson Education, 2008).

The SAT 10 reports the scores by using the stanine method of scaling test scores on a nine-point standard scale with a mean of five and a standard deviation of two. The scores are

also reported as percentile ranks that indicate the percentage of students in the norming sample who scored at or below that percentile score. The percentile ranks range from 1 to 99 with 50 percentile being the national average. The Individual Student Report allows educators to view the students' percentile and stanine scores together on one document. SAT 10 provides a Home Report for parents to better understand their child's academic success and to provide parents with specific ways to support their child's learning through home involvement (Pearson Education, 2008).

### *Data Collection*

The researcher presented the study proposal to the dissertation committee for acceptance. Once the committee approved, the proposal was submitted to the East Tennessee State University's Internal Review Board (IRB) for final approval. On April 16, 2014, the IRB exemption approval was granted to the researcher based on the rules and regulations set forth by 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2) and with the understanding that the study would be conducted while up holding all applicable policies set forth by the IRB.

Prior to the IRB approval, permission was obtained from each school administrator to survey the teachers and to acquire student achievement test scores from grades 5, 8, and 11 for 3 school years. Administrators were sent a packet containing a letter (Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the study and procedural steps to administer and return surveys, the letter to teachers (Appendix B), the Teacher Empowerment Survey (Appendix C), the Teacher Survey Code Sheet (Appendix D), and a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the surveys. The Teacher Survey Code Sheet helped attach test scores to individual teachers that matched the code on the Teacher Empowerment Survey. Participants were not coerced in any way, as all participants received their own survey to complete freely on their own and could return a blank survey if they did not

choose to participate. Privacy and confidentiality for participants was maintained as participants' identities were not required and completed surveys were placed in a sealed envelope. By assigning codes, all school identities were also kept confidential.

Administrators completed the Stanford Achievement Test Group Scores Report (Appendix E) that identified test scores for 2010 -2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years. The total group scores for math and language were collected from grades 5, 8, and 11. Codes were used instead of names of schools or participants to maintain confidentiality but also to match student scores to the appropriate teacher empowerment score.

### *Data Analysis*

Demographic data were analyzed to determine percentages and frequencies. A series of single sample *t*-tests were used to determine if there were significant differences between groups for Research Questions 1-4. A Pearson correlation was used to measure the relationship between teachers' empowerment scores and their averaged student achievement test scores for Research Question 5. Student achievement test scores from SAT-10 for the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years for grades 5, 8, and 11 were analyzed to see if there was a negative or a positive correlation between teachers' perception of empowerment scores and their averaged student achievement test scores. All data were analyzed at the .05 level of significance.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perception of empowerment while working in a Christian school accredited by Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS). Teachers' responses to questions and student achievement test scores were used to measure teacher empowerment in the areas of leadership and decision-making, professional practices, professional practices, and beliefs and experiences.

This section of the study was designed to present and analyze data collected from the survey described in Chapter 3 in order to address five research questions and test their corresponding five null hypotheses. Included in this chapter was a discussion of the return information, demographic description of the TACS teachers, analysis of hypotheses, and a summary.

Teacher empowerment scores were determined through teachers' responses to survey questions. Three hundred twenty-one surveys were sent to teachers in 13 schools. Thirteen TACS schools originally agreed to be involved with the research study; however, only nine of those actually distributed the surveys. There were 231 teachers in the nine TACS schools that choose to participate. One hundred forty-four surveys were returned for a response rate of 61%. Three surveys were eliminated because the teachers returned the survey uncompleted, which signified a desire not to participate; therefore, 141 usable surveys were received and analyzed.

Student achievement test scores were collected and compared to teachers' empowerment scores to determine if there is a relationship between teachers' perception of empowerment and their averaged students' academic test scores. The school administrator from each of the nine participating schools, provided student achievement test scores from SAT-10 for the 2010-2011,

2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years for grades 5, 8, and 11. The total group scores for math and language were collected from grades 5, 8, and 11. There were 42 teachers who instructed grades 5, 8, and 11. Thirty-four of them returned a survey in which a teacher's empowerment score was calculated and compared to student achievement test scores. Eight teachers either did not return the survey or were no longer employed at the school. A statistical test was conducted to determine if there was a negative or a positive correlation between teacher's perception of empowerment scores and student achievement scores.

### *Demographic Description of the TACS Teachers*

The demographic characteristics of the TACS teachers who participated in the study are reflected in Tables 1 through 3. Table 1 shows survey responses based on the age groups of the TACS teachers. The 35-44 age group had the greatest number of responses and accounted for a little over one fourth of teachers. The 25-34 and 35-44 age groups collectively accounted for 51% of the total responses. Only five teachers fell in the 65 and over age group, thus accounting for 3% of the total respondents.

Table 1  
*Age of TACS Teachers*

Age	Number of Responses	Percent
Under 25	16	11
25 – 34	35	25
35 – 44	38	26
45 – 54	27	19
55 – 64	23	16
65 and over	5	3
Total	144	100

Table 2 shows the number of responses from the survey based on the total number of years of teaching experience. Teachers who had taught for 5 years or less made up the largest individual group and accounted for 34% of the total responses received. Five groups whose teaching experience ranged from 6 to 30 years accounted for 58% of surveys returned. Teachers who had taught 31 or more years totaled only 12 respondents. The table indicates that as the groups increased in total years of teaching experience, the number of teachers who responded within the groups decreased.

Table 2  
*Years Teaching Experience of TACS Teachers*

Years Teaching Experience	Number of Responses	Percent
0 – 5	49	34
6 – 10	19	13
11 – 15	24	17
16 – 20	17	12
21 – 25	9	6
26 – 30	14	10
31 – 35	8	6
36 – 40	2	1
41 and above	2	1
Total	144	100

Table 3 reflects the division of teachers based on the highest education degree earned. Most of the teachers (99) indicated that the highest degree earned was the bachelor’s degree which accounted for 69% of the educational degrees earned by the teachers. Forty-three of the teachers had earned master’s degrees, while two teachers had earned associate’s degrees.

Table 3  
*Highest Education Degree of TACS Teachers*

Degree	Number of Responses	Percent
Master	43	30
Bachelor	99	69
Associate	2	1
Total	144	100

*Research Question 1*

Research question 1: Are teacher empowerment scores in leadership and decision making significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?

$H_o1$ : Teacher empowerment scores in leadership and decision making are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.

A single sample t-test was conducted on teachers' perception of empowerment in leadership and decision-making to determine whether the mean score was significantly different from the test value of 3.0, which represents neutrality. The sample mean of 2.42 (SD = .80) was significantly less than 3.0,  $t(143) = -8.79, p < .001$ . Therefore,  $H_o1$  was rejected. In other words, the mean of empowerment scores for leadership and decision-making was significantly less than the test value. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in the means ranged from -.72 to -.45. Therefore, the results indicated teachers perceived they were unempowered in leadership and decision-making to a significant extent. In Figure 1 the distribution of the teachers' responses is displayed. The frequencies represent the total number of teachers who responded on the survey.

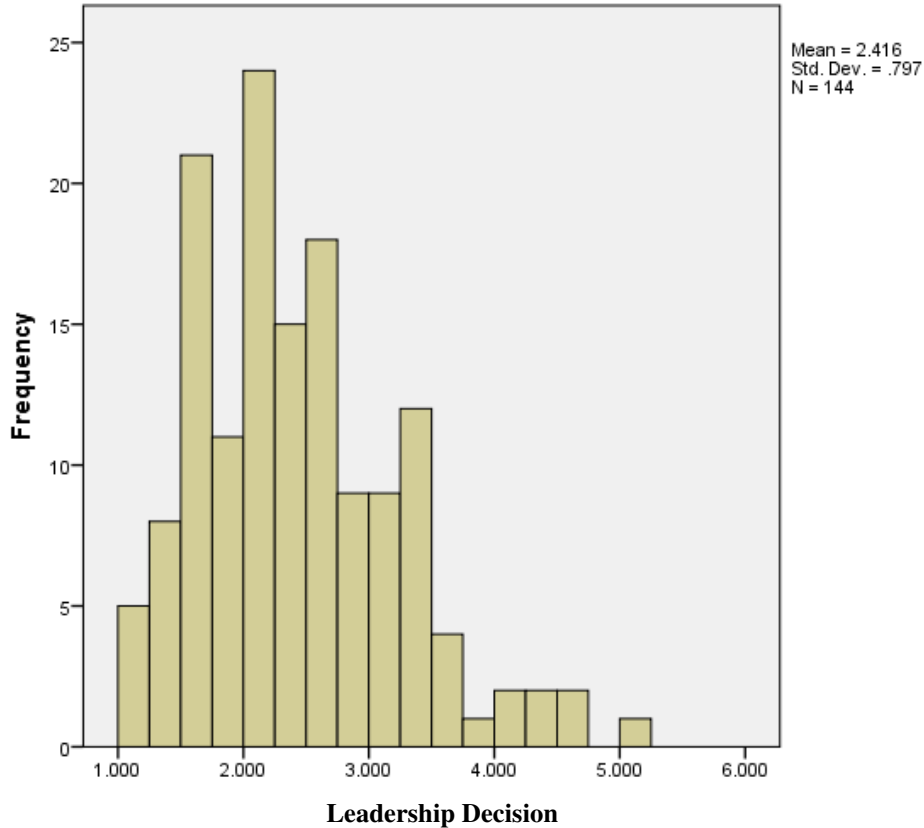


Figure 1: Research Question 1: Leadership and Decision-Making

### Research Question 2

Research question 2: Are teacher empowerment scores in professional practices significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?

$H_02$ : Teacher empowerment scores in professional practices are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.

A single sample t-test was conducted on teachers' perception of empowerment in their professional practices to determine whether the mean score was significantly different from the test value of 3.0, which represents neutrality. The sample mean of 3.77 (SD = .43) was significantly more than 3.0,  $t(143) = 17.16, p < .001$ . Therefore,  $H_02$  was rejected. In other words, the mean of empowerment scores for professional practice was significantly more than



the test value. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in the means ranged from .67 to .85. The results indicated teachers perceived they were empowered in their professional practices to a significant extent. In Figure 2 the distribution of the teachers' responses is displayed. The frequencies represent the total number of teachers who responded on the survey.

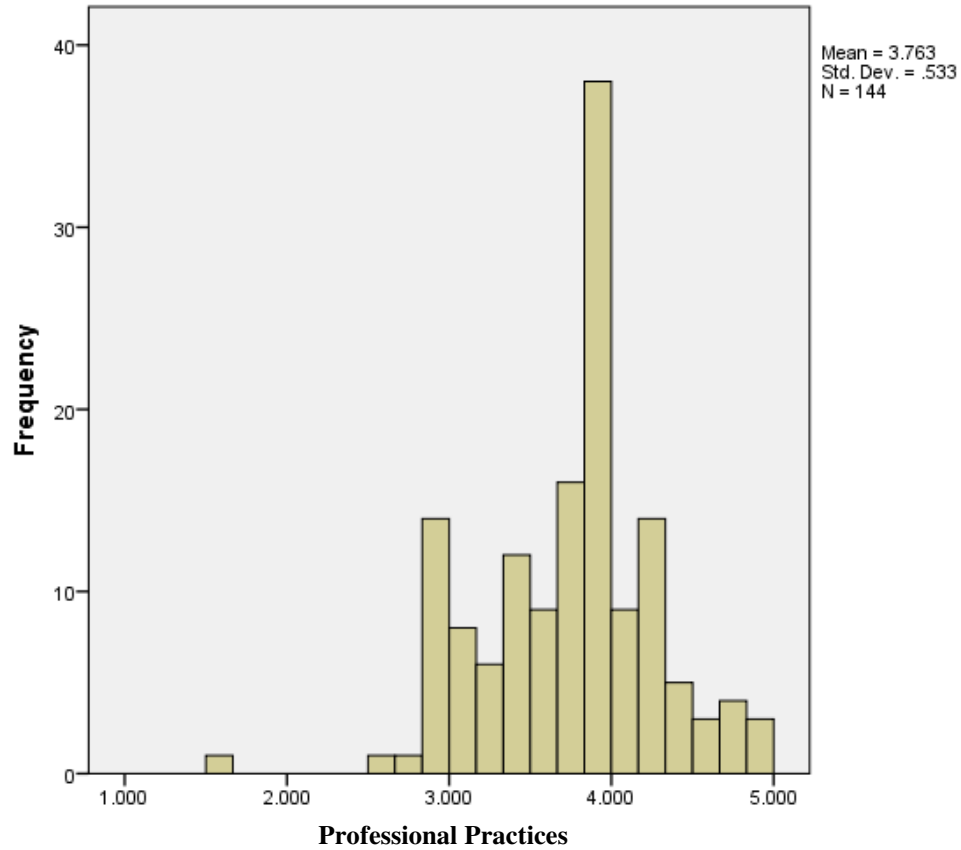


Figure 2: Research Question 2: Professional Practices

### Research Question 3

Research question 3: Are teacher empowerment scores in responsibility for their own professional growth significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?

$H_0$ 3: Teacher empowerment scores in responsibility for their own professional growth are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.

A single sample t-test was conducted on teachers' perception that they are responsible for their own professional growth to determine whether the mean score was significantly different from the test value of 3.0, which represents neutrality. The sample mean of 2.60 (SD = .65) was significantly less than 3.0,  $t(143) = -7.26, p < .001$ . Therefore,  $H_03$  was rejected. In other words, the mean for responsibility scores was significantly less than the test value. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in the means ranged from -.50 to -.29. The results indicated teachers perceive they are irresponsible for their own professional growth to a significant extent. In Figure 3 the distribution of the teachers' responses is displayed. The frequencies represent the total number of teachers who responded on the survey.

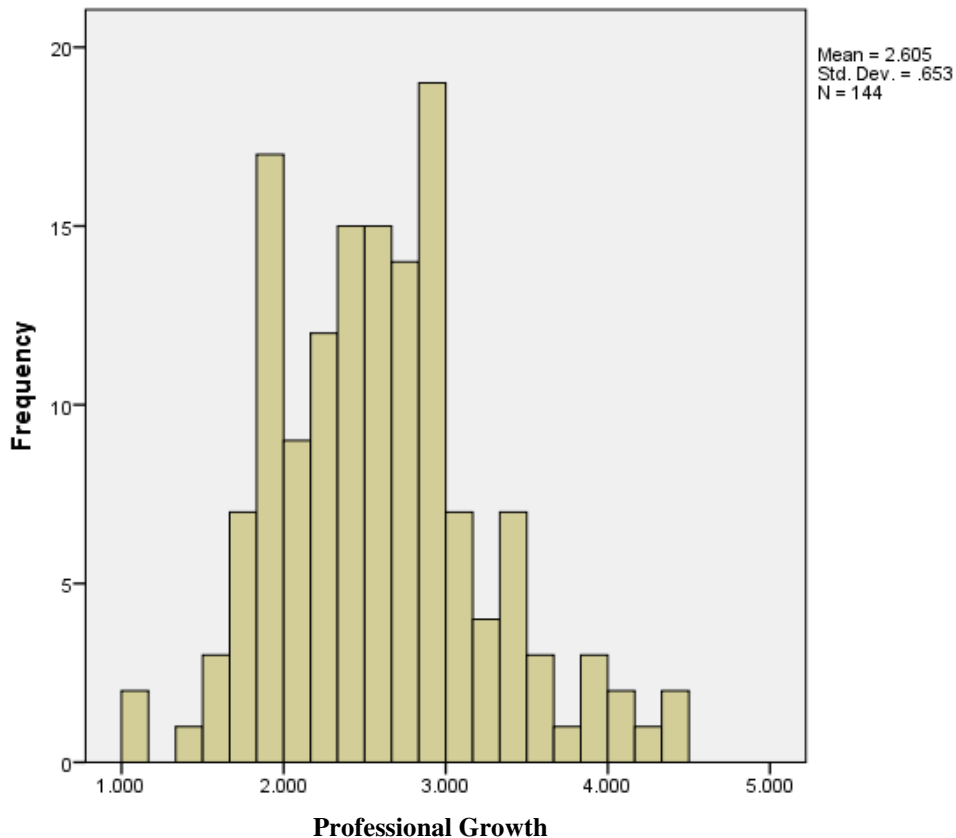


Figure 3: Research Question 3: Professional Development

#### *Research Question 4*

Research question 4: Are teachers' beliefs and experiences significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality?

$H_04$ : Teachers' beliefs and experiences concerning empowerment are not significantly different from the test value of 3 that represents neutrality.

A single sample t-test was conducted on teachers' perception of empowerment in their beliefs and experiences to determine whether the mean score was significantly different from the test value of 3.0, which represents neutrality. The sample mean of 3.82 (SD = .36) was significantly more than 3.0,  $t(143) = 26.67, p < .001$ . Therefore,  $H_04$  was rejected. In other words, the mean for empowerment beliefs and experiences was significantly more than the test value. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in the means ranged from .74 to .86. The results indicated teachers perceived they were empowered in their beliefs and experiences to a significant extent. In Figure 4 the distribution of the teachers' responses is displayed. The frequencies represent the total number of teachers who responded on the survey.

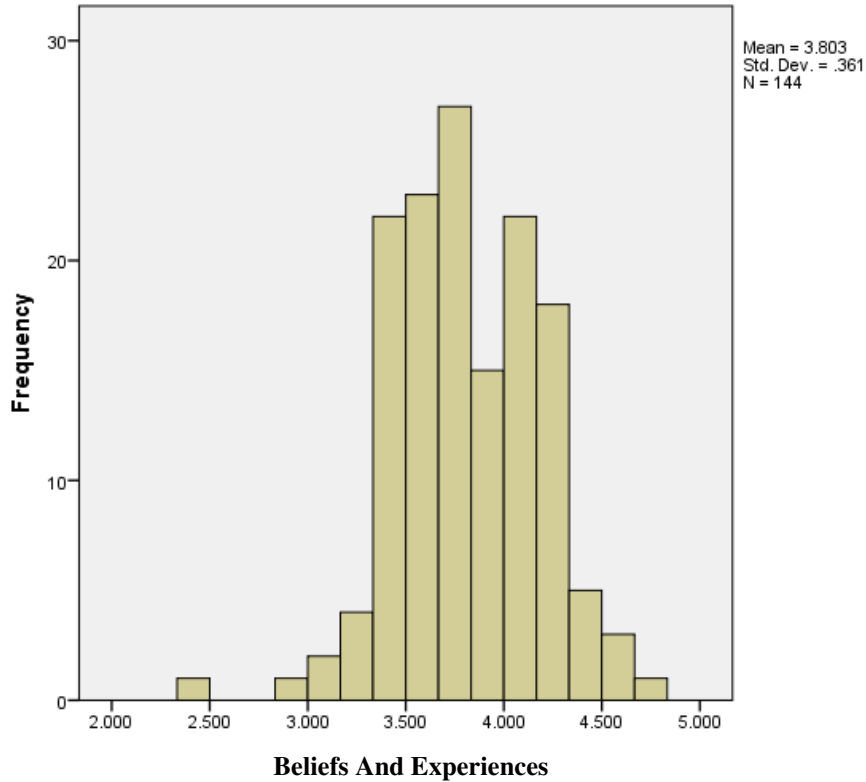


Figure 4: Research Question 4: Beliefs and Experiences

#### Research Question 5

Research question 5: Is there a significant correlation between teacher empowerment scores and their averaged students' achievement test scores?

$H_05$ : There is not a significant relationship between teacher scores and their averaged students' achievement test scores.

A Pearson correlation was used to measure the relationship between teachers' empowerment score and their averaged student achievement test scores. The means and standard deviations of the variables are shown in Table 4. The results of the correlation indicated a weak positive correlation [ $r(33) = .224, p = .204$ ]; therefore, the null hypothesis  $H_05$  was not rejected. Even though it was not significant, there was a slight relationship indicating the teachers who had higher student test scores also had a higher empowerment score. A p value of less than .005

was required for significance; therefore, because the p value was not low enough, the measurement of the relationship was not significant. Teachers' empowerment scores were not significantly useful in predicting student achievement. The number of teacher empowerment scores was less than the number of student test scores because some teachers taught more than one testing group. Figure 5 shows a scatter plot reflecting an upward positive direction that indicates a weak positive correlation.

Table 4: *Means and Standard Deviations of the Variables*

Variables	N	M	SD
Teacher Empowerment Scores	34	3.36	.47
Averaged Student Test Scores	42	79.26	12.41

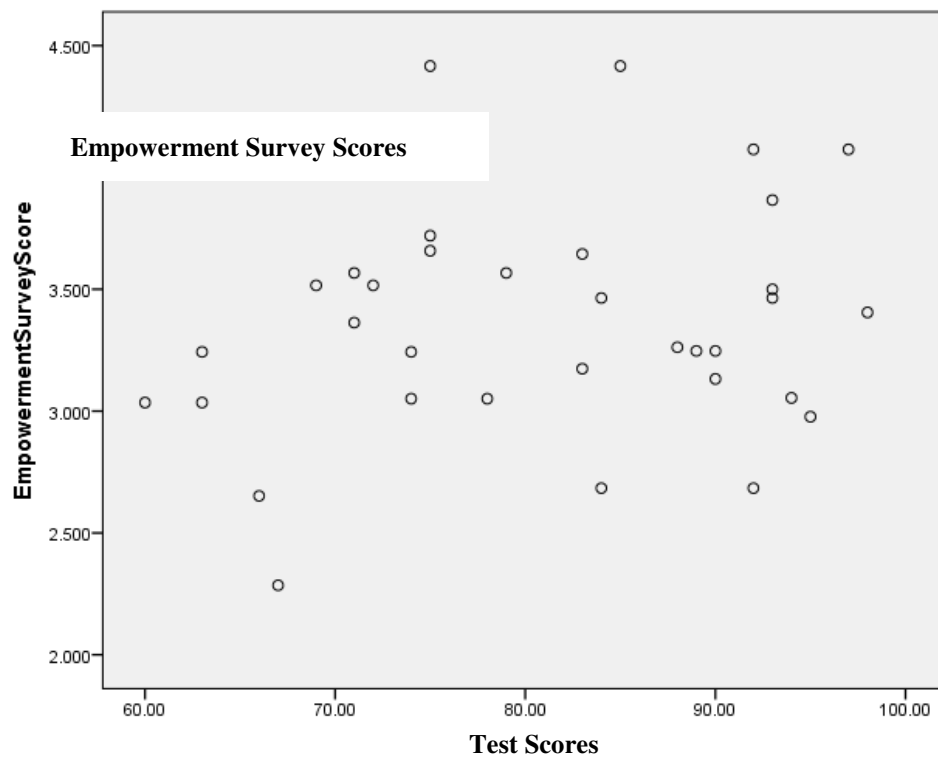


Figure 5: Research Question 5: Teacher Empowerment Scores and Student Achievement Test Scores Comparison

### *Summary*

The purpose of this study began with five specific research questions that focused on understanding teachers' perception of empowerment. Data were collected using a survey to measure teacher empowerment in the following areas: teacher leadership, decision-making, professional practices, professional growth, and beliefs and experiences. Statistical tests were conducted and results were used to answer research questions. Graphs were used to present statistical test results for research questions 1 through 4 and a scatter plot was used to visualize statistical test results for research question 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### *Introduction*

This chapter includes the findings, summary, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research for Christian school leaders who are looking for ways to improve teacher empowerment and school effectiveness. This study was examination of the perceptions of teachers regarding their empowerment while working in a Christian educational environment. A survey was used to collect data on teacher responsibilities, training, experiences, affiliation, and professional practices. Student achievement test scores were examined to see if there was a correlation between teachers' perception of empowerment and student achievement.

#### *Summary*

One hundred forty-four teachers from 9 Christian schools (K-12) that are accredited by the Tennessee of Association of Christian Schools (TACS) chose to participate out of 300 surveys distributed. The statistical analysis reported from the study was based on five research questions presented in Chapters 1 and 3. Each research question had one null hypothesis. Research questions 1 through 4 were analyzed using a series of *t*-tests. Research question 5 was analyzed by using a Pearson correlation. Findings indicated that the teachers' perceived they were empowered in some areas while in other areas they did not. The teachers perceived they were empowered in practices, beliefs, and experiences to a significant extent. However, they perceived they were unempowered in leadership, decision-making, and professional development to a significant extent. The results of the correlation indicated that teachers' empowerment scores may be useful in predicting student achievement but not to a significant extent.

## *Conclusions*

This study examined the perceptions of teachers regarding their empowerment while working in a Christian educational environment. A survey was used to collect data on teacher responsibilities, training, experiences, affiliation, and professional practices. Student achievement test scores were examined to see if there was a correlation between teachers' perception of empowerment and student achievement.

The following conclusions were based upon the findings from the data of this study:

1. A significant difference was in teachers' perception of empowerment in the area of leadership and decision-making. The population mean of 2.42 was significantly lower than 3.0, the value representing neutrality. The results indicated teachers perceived they were unempowered in leadership and decision-making to a significant extent. Teachers did not believe they made contributions to the choices that affected the program or student learning. This conclusion appeared to concur with previous studies conducted by Berry et al. (2008), Short (1994), and Estrom (2009). Berry et al. reported that one major concern of the teachers was that they had little to almost no say in decisions. Short described schools that followed a more bureaucratic structure inhibited teachers from actively participating in decision-making. It was noted in this study that one third of the teachers had 5 or fewer years of experience. Inexperienced teachers may not have been comfortable stepping into leadership roles or participating in the decision-making process.
2. A significant difference was found in teachers' perception of empowerment in the area of professional practices. The population mean of 3.77 was significantly higher than 3.0, the value representing neutrality. The results indicated teachers perceived



they were empowered in professional practices to a significant extent. The results were congruent with the findings depicted in Allington et al. (2011) who reported that administrators who supported empowerment encouraged teachers to try new things such as a new teaching method or a unique activity. New devices or strategies that seemed not to be beneficial were viewed as a learning opportunity and not a failure. The conclusion that teachers felt empowered in their professional practices also suggested that they valued the importance of self-assessments and collaboration with colleagues. The teachers felt comfortable requesting and providing thoughtful comments among each other to improve self-performance. This finding also paralleled the results from Allington et al. that teachers who felt empowered desired to seek ways to improve their practices. The work itself was very meaningful to the teachers.

3. A significant difference was found in teachers' perception of empowerment in the area of professional development. The population mean of 2.60 was significantly lower than 3.0, the value representing neutrality. The results indicated teachers perceived they were unempowered in professional development to a significant extent. This was contrary to findings by Short et al. (1994) who explained that teachers developed the competence to take charge of their own professional growth. In this current study the teachers did not report that they had much of a voice in their professional development.
4. A significant difference was found in teachers' perception of empowerment in their beliefs and experiences. The population mean of 3.82 was significantly higher than 3.0, the value representing neutrality. The results indicated teachers perceived they

were empowered in their beliefs and experiences to a significant extent. This conclusion mirrored the results of previous studies. Musselwhite (2007) reported that empowered employees were more independent and confident in their own beliefs and abilities. According to Bogler et al.'s (2004) research on self-efficacy, teachers explained that they acquired the skills and knowledge to establish programs that affected student learning. The conclusion that teachers felt empowered in beliefs and experiences confirmed that they were self-assured in their philosophy of education. They valued collaboration with colleagues and desired to assess their own performance as well as receive feedback from peers and administrators. This finding also supported the conclusions of Short (1994) and Allington et al. (2011). Short reported that teachers were more willing to contribute and collaborate over program details when their skills, input, and expertise were recognized and supported by their peers. Allington et al. conveyed that teachers greatly benefited from exchanging ideas and reflecting out loud. The conclusion also implied that teachers felt responsible for planning curricular initiatives, having assessed curriculum, and teaching methodologies. This understanding was similar to Short's finding that when teachers were provided the opportunity to play a more influential role in education; they impacted classroom activities and methodology. At this level of involvement, teachers were more prone to take responsibility for the decisions they made. This study concurred with Short's findings that empowered teachers felt more directly connected to student learning and believed they should be held responsible for their work.

5. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between teachers' empowerment scores and their averaged student achievement test scores. There was a weak positive correlation between the two variables,  $r = .224$ ,  $n = 33$ ,  $p = .204$ . A  $p$  value of less than  $.005$  was required for significance; therefore, because the  $p$  value was not low enough, the measurement of the relationship was not significant. The scatter plot reflected an upward positive direction. Even though it was not significant, there was a slight relationship indicating the teachers who had higher student test scores also had a higher empowerment score. The correlation coefficient was not close enough to 1 to be significant. Therefore, while teachers' empowerment scores may have been useful in predicting student achievement, the relationship between the two variables was not significant. This result is similar to Berry et al. (2008) who researched the impact of teachers' working conditions and student achievement and found the results of analyses varied and recommended multiple-year gains analyses be conducted to help understand all possible connections. In contrast, Moolenaar et al. (2012) reported a strong positive correlation between student achievement in language and teacher empowerment. Their findings were that teachers' collective efficacy beliefs supported student achievement. Teachers who believed that they were able to motivate and challenge their students were teaching in school systems where students' achievement scores for language were higher.

#### *Recommendations for Practice*

As a result of this research and the review of the related literature, the following are my recommendations for practice.

1. Christian school leaders should create environments that support empowerment.
2. Christian school leaders need to recognize that teachers have acquired the knowledge, ability, and skills needed to solve problems and to make decisions.
3. Christian school leaders should encourage teachers to participate in decision-making opportunities that impact school effectiveness outside of the classroom.
4. Christian school leaders need to share leadership responsibilities with teachers.
5. Christian school leaders need to encourage teachers to express thoughts, ideas, and suggestions to increase self-esteem and commitment.
6. Christian school leaders should help build teachers' sense of autonomy.
7. Christian school leaders should motivate teachers to be more risk takers, to use a variety of resources to plan instruction, and incorporate multiple teaching methodologies.
8. Christian school leaders should encourage and conduct teacher self-assessments.
9. Christian school leaders should foster collaborations.
10. Christian school leaders should elicit the opinions of teachers when considering professional development.
11. Christian school leaders should provide ways for educators to display knowledge and skills as well as opportunities for further understanding.
12. Christian school leaders should work on improving meaningful interpersonal relationships with faculty.
13. Christian school leaders should use appraisals and feedback to impact teachers' professional development.
14. Christian school leaders should strive to increase teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

15. Christian school leaders should find ways to recognize and support teachers' achievements.

When Christian schools are restructured to support an empowered environment, teachers are recognized as professionals and given the opportunity to share in leadership responsibilities that create and design the curriculum as well as establish improvement initiatives that affect total school effectiveness. In an empowered climate, teachers are more committed, participate in collaborative efforts, accept and support change, begin to take ownership, value program goals, and desire to seek out areas of weakness in order to grow professionally.

Christian administrators need to reconsider the roles of leaders and teachers. The combined efforts of administrators and teachers working toward the same goals could result in an increase in personal development, motivation, job satisfaction, and teaching effectiveness.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

The research on teacher empowerment is vast but somewhat dated and not related to Christian schools. I recommend the following areas for additional research.

1. A study comparing teachers' perceptions of empowerment and student achievement in public schools.
2. A study comparing teachers' perceptions of empowerment in public schools to teachers' perceptions of empowerment in Christian Schools.
3. A study comparing teachers' perceptions of empowerment in Christian schools with a female principal to those with a male principal.
4. A study comparing Christian school teachers' perceptions of empowerment and teachers' years of experience.

5. A study comparing teachers' perceptions of empowerment in several different regional locations.
6. A study comparing teachers' perceptions of empowerment in other countries.
7. A qualitative study examining teachers' perception of empowerment and unempowerment in leadership and decision-making while working in Christian schools.

Understanding empowerment with its benefits is essential for administrators and teachers who work in Christian school settings. Additional research will provide a clearer picture for Christian leaders of the improvements needed to increase school effectiveness. Christian schools experience the same challenges and pressures that public schools face; therefore, creating empowered environments is one step toward positive change. Christian leaders who value research and who are committed to excellence will desire to assess every academic area and organizational structure in order to plan, monitor, and continue improvement efforts.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Letter to TACS School Administrators

April 14, 2014

Dear Administrator,

Thank you for being willing to participate in this research study. This study is being conducted by Melody Archer, a doctoral student in the College of Education at East Tennessee State University under the direction of Dr. Virginia Foley, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis. The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' perception of empowerment in Christian schools accredited by Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS). Teachers are invited to complete a survey that will reflect their own thoughts and feelings as an educator. Student achievement test scores will be explored to see if there is a correlation between teacher's perception of empowerment and student achievement.

Enclosed is a letter explaining this research, a survey, and an envelope for each of your teachers. Each teacher will need to code their survey for the purpose of organizing and managing incoming data as well as maintaining confidentiality. A Teacher Survey Code Sheet has also been provided for the administrator to assign a code to each teacher. Teachers should be given their code prior to starting the survey. The survey takes approximately ten minutes to complete. Participation is totally voluntary, and one may stop answering questions or decide not to participate in the study at any time. All survey responses will be kept confidential and will not be attributed to you in any way. The teacher will place the survey in the envelope, seal it, write their code across the seal, and turn it in to the administrator. There are no known risks involved but the information gathered can greatly benefit Christian schools.

The Stanford Achievement Test Scores Report is also enclosed and should be completed by the principal or school administrator. The report has been coded to ensure confidentiality. The form will document the total group scores for math and language from grades 5, 8 and 11 for the 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years. Only the teacher's code is to be used when completing this report (refer back to the Teacher Survey Code Sheet). When reporting the research findings, real names will not be used to identify participants or schools.

The surveys (leave in sealed envelopes) and the Stanford Achievement Test Scores Report are to be returned in the prepaid self-addressed envelope that has been provided for you and mail the packet, no later than May 16, 2014.

Thanks again for your valuable time and assistance in this research. If you have any questions, you may call Mrs. Melody Archer at (423) 676-6840, or Dr. Virginia Foley at (423) 439-7615. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at (423) 439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at (423) 439-6055 or (423) 439-6002.

Sincerely,

Melody Archer

## **Appendix B: Letter to TACS Teachers**

Dear Teacher,

You are invited to participate in a study that is investigating teachers' perception of empowerment. This study is being conducted by Melody Archer, a doctoral student in the College of Education of East Tennessee State University under the direction of Dr. Virginia Foley of the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. Christian schools that are accredited by Tennessee Association of Christian Schools are invited to participate. You were selected because you teach in a school that agreed to participate in the study.

Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate. You can quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Melody Archer, whose phone number is (423) 676-6840. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you to complete the attached survey about your perception of your level of empowerment. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your administrator will give you a specific code number. Write the code in the place provided on the front page. The code number is for the purpose of organizing and managing incoming data as well as maintaining confidentiality. Once you have completed the survey or if you choose not to participate, place the survey in the envelope, seal it, write your code across the seal, and give it to your administrator.

Student achievement test scores from Stanford Achievement Test 10 for the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years for grades 5, 8, and 11 will be used to examine to see if there is a correlation between teachers' perception of empowerment and student achievement. Only the teacher's code is to be used when recording student achievement test scores. All school scores will be coded to ensure confidentiality.

When reporting the research findings, real names will not be used to identify participants or schools. Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU IRB, and personnel particular to this research, Melody Archer, have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

By completing the survey, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a copy of this informed consent document. You have been given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator. You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project. There are no known risks involved. There is no direct benefit to participants but the information gathered can greatly benefit Christian schools. If you have any questions, you may call Mrs. Melody Archer at (423) 676-6840, or Dr. Virginia Foley at (423) 439-7615. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at (423) 439-6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at (423) 439-6055 or (423) 439-6002.

Thanks again for your valuable time and assistance in this research.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Melody Archer

## Appendix C: Teacher Empowerment Survey

### Teacher Empowerment Survey

Teacher Code \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire consists of five sections. The purpose of the survey is to determine how teacher empowerment and participation in a school accredited by Tennessee Association of Christian Schools (TACS) has impacted your professional growth. There is a demographic section asking you to check the appropriate response. Then there are statements that provide five response options from 1 = never to 5 = very often or 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Please select the response item that best describes your experience.

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

Complete the following:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Years experience in education: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Degree Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Years experience in current school: \_\_\_\_\_

#### LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Please respond to the following items by putting the number of the response that most closely matches your experiences in the blank on the left.

5 = Very Often      4 = Often      3 = Moderately      2 = Seldom      1 = Never

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I have participated in leadership roles at the school level.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I have served on the council/leadership team at our school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I have served on task forces.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I have participated in the goal setting process for our school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I have an active role in decision-making at our school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I have participated in leadership roles at the district level.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I am active in community, civic, and social organizations.

#### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I use a variety of resources such as technology, magazines, special guests or specialized books to plan my instruction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I reflect on and evaluate my own work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I get excited about teaching.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I talk to other teachers about instructional strategies and lessons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I plan and design my own instructional materials.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I use a variety of methods to design lessons for my students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I involve students in planning instruction.

Foley, V. P. (1996). *An Analysis of the Impact of Teacher Empowerment on Teacher Development: A Four Year Study*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama)

## PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Please respond to the following items by putting the number of the response that most closely matches your experiences in the blank on the left.

5 = Very Often      4 = Often      3 = Moderately      2 = Seldom      1 = Never

- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I seek workshops to attend during the summer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I observe colleagues' teaching.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I invite observation by my peers
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I read professional journals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I teach formal inservices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I invite observation by my supervisors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I attend professional conferences.

## BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCES

Please respond to the following items by putting the number of the response that most closely matches your experiences in the blank on the left.

5 = Strongly Agree      4 = Agree      3 = Undecided      2 = Disagree      1 = Strongly Disagree

- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I believe that teachers should make decisions about curriculum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I have learned a lot about teaching from my colleagues.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I have a professional responsibility to plan curricular initiatives in our school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I am actively involved in a professional organization.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. My teaching style has changed greatly over the last four years.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. The number of professional leave days I have taken has increased over the past four years.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I look forward to learning new ways of doing things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. Action research should guide practice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I have an understanding of how students learn.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I have a well-defined philosophy of education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I am committed to my career as an educator.

Foley, V. P. (1996). *An Analysis of the Impact of Teacher Empowerment on Teacher Development: A Four Year Study*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama)



**Appendix D: Teacher Survey Code Sheet**

**Teachers' Perception of Empowerment in Christian Schools  
Research Study by Melody Archer  
Teacher Survey Code Sheet**

**School Code: 100**

Dear,

Assign each teacher one of the following codes. Teachers should be given their assigned code prior to starting the survey. The teacher will place the completed survey in the envelope, seal it, write their code across the seal, and turn it in to the administrator. Administrator will need to ***keep this report to use to complete the Stanford Achievement Test Scores Report.*** This information may be discarded once the research packet has been mailed.

**Teacher Survey Code Sheet**

Research Code	Teacher's Name		Teacher's Name	Research Code
101				126
102				127
103				128
104				129
105				130
106				131
107				132
108				133
109				134
110				135
111				136
112				137
113				138
114				139
115				140
116				141
117				142
118				143
119				144
120				145
121				146
122				147
123				148
124				149
125				150

**Appendix E: Stanford Achievement Test Group Scores Report**

**Teachers’ Perception of Empowerment in Christian Schools  
Research Study by Melody Archer**

**School Code: 100**

Stanford Achievement Test Group Scores Report

Dear Administrator,

This report will document the total group scores for math and language from grades 5, 8 and 11 for the 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years. The report is coded to ensure confidentiality and for the purpose of organizing and managing incoming data. When reporting the research findings, real names will not be used to identify participants or schools. **Only the teacher’s code is to be used** when recording group scores in the chart below (refer back to the Teacher Survey Code Sheet).

The surveys (leave in sealed envelopes) and the Stanford Achievement Test Scores Report are to be returned in the prepaid self-addressed envelope that has been provided for you and mail the packet, no later than May 16, 2014.

Thank you once again for participating in my study.

Mrs. Melody Archer

**Math**  
Total Group Scores

Year	Teacher’s Code	Grade 5	Teacher’s Code	Grade 8	Teacher’s Code	Grade 11
2010-2011						
2011-2012						
2012-2013						

**Language**  
Total Group Scores

Year	Teacher’s Code	Grade 5	Teacher’s Code	Grade 8	Teacher’s Code	Grade 11
2010-2011						
2011-2012						
2012-2013						

VITA

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