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# Elementary Teacher Decisions and Effects of Years of Experience

Debra DeAnn Collins  
*Georgia Southern University*

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ELEMENTARY TEACHER DECISIONS  
AND EFFECTS OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

by

DEBRA D. COLLINS

(Under the Direction of Paul M. Brinson, Jr.)

ABSTRACT

A wide range of decisions must be made in schools every day. Many of these decisions are made by administrators; however, teachers can and should be involved in decision-making at the school level. Teachers are professionals and should be provided the autonomy to make decisions that they believe are in the best interest of their students, schools, and profession. This research study surveyed certified elementary teachers to determine which types of decisions they desired to participate in making and to determine if years of teaching experience impacted teachers' willingness to participate in certain types of decisions. This study provides elementary school administrators with insight into the types of decisions that can be delegated to teachers that engage them in decision-making practices. This is a quantitative non-experimental study using a survey instrument, *Teacher Decision Survey*. Teachers clearly want to participate in decisions at the school level; however, they have varying decisions they desire. Evaluation, instructional coordination, and rules and discipline are decision types that teachers desire to participate in making. Findings indicate that there is a relationship between a teacher's years of experience and the types of decisions he/she desires to participate in making.

INDEX WORDS: Decision-making, Shared decision-making, Teacher decisions, Years of teaching experience

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AND EFFECTS OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

by

DEBRA D. COLLINS

BS, Georgia State University, 1985

MED, Georgia State University, 1990

EDS, State University of West Georgia, 2004

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in  
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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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2012

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by

DEBRA D. COLLINS

Major Professor: Paul M. Brinson, Jr.

Committee: Linda M. Arthur  
Teri Denlea Melton

Electronic Version Approved:

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the incredible people in my life who have loved, encouraged, and supported me. To my husband, Bert, and my children, Ashley and Nathan, I would never have accomplished this without their encouragement, willingness to share my time, and willingness to sacrifice date nights, family time, and even vacation time so I could attend classes, read, and write. To my parents, Dewey and Anita Stroup, I want to thank you for being the awesome examples you have always been for me. Thank you for believing in me and instilling the internal drive and motivation to never give up until the goal is completed and knowing that no goal is too high to attain. I want to thank my extended family for all the support you give me each and every day. Above all, I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for allowing me the opportunities to learn, grow, and reach my goals all along the way.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	6
Procedures.....	7
Definitions of Terms.....	8
Chapter Summary .....	10
2 SELECTED REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE .....	12
Decision-Making .....	13
Models of Educational Decision-Making .....	16
Shared Decision-Making .....	22
Types of School Level Decisions .....	25
Teacher Perceptions of School-Based Decision-Making .....	26
Teacher Willingness to Participate in Decision-Making .....	30
Job Satisfaction and Motivation.....	34
Years of Teaching Experience.....	38
Chapter Summary .....	43
3 METHODOLOGY .....	45
Research Questions .....	46
Research Design .....	46
Sample and Sampling .....	52



Instrumentation .....	53
Data Collection .....	55
Data Analysis .....	56
Reporting the Data .....	59
Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions.....	59
Chapter Summary .....	61
<b>4 REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>62</b>
Introduction .....	62
Research Questions .....	63
Research Design.....	63
Respondents .....	64
Data Collection .....	65
Response to Research Questions .....	66
Overarching research question .....	70
Research subquestion 1 .....	71
Open-ended questions .....	77
Chapter Summary .....	79
<b>5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>81</b>
Summary.....	81
Discussion of Research Findings .....	83
Types of Decisions Certified Elementary Teachers are Likely to Participate ...	83
Relationship between the Types of Decisions and Years of Experience.....	84
Open-Ended Questions .....	85
Changes in willingness to participate in decisions at the school level .....	85
Changes to the survey .....	89

Conclusions.....	90
Implications for Administrators.....	93
Recommendations for Administrators.....	94
Recommendations for Further Study.....	95
Dissemination.....	95
REFERENCES.....	96
APPENDICES	
A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF STUDY.....	106
B TEACHER DECISION SURVEY.....	107
C TEACHER DECISION SURVEY WITH REFERENCES.....	109
D SURVEY ITEMS BY DECISION CATEGORY.....	111
E GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....	113
F YEARS OF EXPERIENCE GROUP THAT RANKED HIGHEST PER DECISION TYPE.....	114

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Survey Items by Decision Type: Instructional Coordination .....	47
Table 2: Survey Items by Decision Type: Curriculum Development.....	48
Table 3: Survey Items by Decision Type: General School Administration.....	48
Table 4: Survey Items by Decision Type: Rules and Discipline .....	49
Table 5: Survey Items by Decision Type: Policy Making .....	49
Table 6: Survey Items by Decision Type: Staff Development .....	50
Table 7: Survey Items by Decision Type: Evaluation .....	50
Table 8: Survey Items by Decision Type: Personnel.....	51
Table 9: Survey Items by Decision Type: School Improvement.....	51
Table 10: Schools Participating in Study Ranked by Percent of Free/Reduced Meals .....	53
Table 11: Years of Teaching Experience.....	65
Table 12: Individual Decision Items Ranked by Mean Scores.....	67
Table 13: Types of Decisions in Rank Order.....	71
Table 14: Pearson product-moment coorelations between Years of Experience and Decision Types.....	72
Table 15: Sum of Means Scores of Variables.....	75
Table 16: Years of Experience Groups Ranked by Sum of Means Scores.....	76
Table 17: One-Way ANOVA: Types of Decisions Compared to Years of Experience .....	77
Table 18: Themes of Open-Ended Question #1.....	78

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership is at a crossroads. The demands on leadership are increasing (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002; Donaldson, 2006). Hardworking administrators tell tales of job frustration: 60 plus hours per week, constant stress, continuous multi-tasking, major paper work, and the inability to spend quality time on instructional leadership. Administrators are overwhelmed with the myriad of responsibilities they must accomplish as the demands on school leaders have become more alarming (Crowther et al., 2002). They cannot accomplish the tasks required of successful schools alone; instead, they must develop skills, strategies, and knowledge to assist them by sharing responsibilities with teachers (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). Administrators need to find the best path to share responsibility by tapping into the expertise, ideas, and efforts of others (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Keung, 2008; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Robbins & Alvy, 2004). It is important that administrators collaborate with teachers, because the relationships among the adults in schools have more impact on the quality and the character of schools than any other factor (Barth, 2001). Through collaboration and shared responsibility of decision-making, cooperation, and trust can be built, and everyone involved can become more empowered in meaningful ways (Barth, 1990; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Connors, 2000; DuFour et al., 2008; Lambert, 1998).

A wide range of decisions must be made in schools every day. These decisions include everything from who will represent the school on county committees, which students will take an alternative assessment, and how many pencils teachers will be allotted from the budget to what kinds of flowers will be planted in the school courtyards.

Many of these decisions are made by school level administrators; however, teachers can and should be involved in decision-making at the school level (Blase & Kirby, 2000; DuFour et al., 2008; Keung, 2008). Teachers make hundreds of decisions every day in their classrooms about supplies, discipline, and assignments, but many other decisions that directly affect teachers' lives and professions are made by administrators (Barth, 1990). Administrators must be willing to share the responsibility with teachers and recognize that the teacher is the most important variable affecting student learning (Pilcher & Lague, 2009). As professionals, teachers should be provided the autonomy to make decisions that they believe are in the best interests of their students, schools, and profession. Everyone has the potential and right to work as a leader, and democracy clearly defines the rights of individuals to actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives (Lambert, 1998). Through shared, collaborative, and group decision-making, administrators and teachers can democratically work together to make decisions that will enhance the school's purpose and vision as well as increase collegial relationships, teacher job satisfaction, and student achievement (Barth, 1990; Donaldson, 2006; Georgia Department of Education, 2004; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006). Administrators should not feel that they should solve all of the problems and make all the decisions, but they should work with teachers to solve the problems and collaboratively make decisions (Maxwell, 1993; Robbins & Alvy, 2004).

Involving teachers in decision-making is an administrative responsibility (Blase & Kirby, 2000; DuFour et al., 2008), and administrators should be aware of which decisions teachers have an interest in making. Through distribution of leadership in school-level decisions, teachers can be highly motivational in shaping the schools' direction and

values and in exercising influence beyond the classrooms (Crowther et al., 2002).

Teachers need to be involved, and, in order to do so effectively, administrators need to provide teachers with opportunities to make meaningful decisions (Connors, 2000).

Deal, Governor of Georgia, said:

The most important characteristic of a great school is the quality of its teachers.

These teachers are knowledgeable about their subject matter, passionate about engaging students to learn, and focused on the academic progress of all students.

(Raudonis, 2011b, p. 6)

Teachers work each day to make a positive difference in the lives of their students (Pilcher & Largue, 2009). Good schools depend on administrators recognizing that teachers are capable of being responsible for their students' education and empowering them with the ability to make the decisions on how to best accomplish successes (Raudonis, 2011b).

Barge, the State School Superintendent for Georgia, has stated that administrators should create environments where people enjoy their work. He said that administrators should seek flexibility and creativity to find solutions that work for their schools and communities (Raudonis, 2011a). One way Georgia educators have worked to find solutions is through the development and implementation of the Georgia Department of Education administrator evaluation system entitled Leader Keys. Leader Keys emphasized that quality leadership significantly impacts student achievement. As part of the 10 leadership performance standards included in Leader Keys, decision-making is a major component. School administrators must demonstrate an understanding of "current academic achievement data and instructional strategies to make appropriate educational

decisions to improve classroom instruction, increase student achievement, and improve overall school effectiveness” (Barge, 2012, p. 35). Administrators cannot do this alone; they must involve teachers in the decision-making processes as they are the ones closest to student achievement (Lashway, 2003). Leader Keys also requires that school administrators utilize “shared decision-making to build relationships with all stakeholders and maintain positive school morale” (Barge, 2012, p. 36). As Leader Keys demonstrates, collaborative, open decision-making processes must be in place in order for administrators to build collegiality with teachers and enhance student achievement.

In order to assist administrators in decision-making processes and to add to the research on decision-making, this research study surveyed certified elementary teachers to determine which types of decisions they were likely to participate in making and to determine if years of teaching experience impacted teachers’ desire to participate in certain decisions. This study provided elementary school administrators with insight into the types of decisions that can be delegated to teachers that will engage them in decision-making practices that ultimately will empower teachers in their profession.

This study was conducted in a suburban Georgia county with a population of over 203,000. The school district consisted of approximately 50 schools. The student demographics of the school district included 46.3% African American students, 40.2% Caucasian students, 6.4% Hispanic students, 2.8% Asian students, and 4.2% other ethnicities. The overall socio-economic rate based on free or reduced meals was 48.71%. There were 933 certified teachers in the school district. The average teacher in the district had 12.3 years of teaching experience.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Decisions are made in schools every day, and each one has an impact on someone affiliated with the school. Decision-making is complex, and there are a number of models of educational decision-making including shared, collaborative, group, and consensus models. The types of decisions that are made at the school level range from curriculum to policy to student consequences. The way teachers perceive the effectiveness of decision-making has an impact on the participation level of teachers in the process. Several researchers (e.g., Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Lynch, 2010; Reeves, 2006; Somech, 2005) have provided information on teacher decision-making. Research has shown that the way teachers perceive their involvement in decision-making has had an impact on their motivation and job satisfaction; however, teachers' willingness to participate in specific types of school-based decisions and how it relates to years of teaching experience are lesser known.

By providing information on the types of decisions teachers are likely to make and their years of teaching experience, administrators at the elementary level are able to better delegate decisions to teachers that have a more positive impact as it enables teachers to make decisions, to be active participants, and to grow professionally. Ultimately, this information can be used by administrators to effectively delegate decisions, to provide better use of collaboration time, and to improve the environment within which teachers work and students learn. The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study is to determine the types of decisions that teachers want to participate in making and to determine if a relationship exists between teachers' desire to participate in specific types of decisions and years of teaching experience at the elementary level.



## **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following overarching research question: In what types of decisions do certified elementary teachers want to participate? The sub-question that guided the study was:

1. Does a relationship exist between the types of decisions teachers want to participate in making and years of teaching experience at the elementary level?

## **Significance of the Study**

As an elementary school administrator, the researcher has experienced the impact of decision-making on school climate. Decisions are made constantly in schools. Many times teachers question the decisions made and often comment that they had no input in the outcomes. The researcher wanted to determine what types of decisions teachers truly desired to participate in making at the school level. Teachers are professionals and should be given the opportunities to make decisions that impact their professions, students, and schools; however, due to years of teaching experience, there may be decisions teachers do not want to be involved in making (see Appendix A).

This study is unique because it researched the types of decisions certified elementary teachers are likely to participate in making and how years of teaching experience related to the types of decisions. The results of this study help elementary administrators by providing guidance on the types of decisions that should be delegated to teachers at varying stages in their teaching careers. Through proper delegation, administrators are able to better share responsibilities with teachers, which should reduce administrator stress and work load and allow more time for collaboration. It also benefits

teachers because as administrators implement the findings, teachers gain professional opportunities to make decisions they deem worthy of participation. The study benefits society as it gives administrators and teachers a common understanding of teachers' decision-making participation at varying levels in their teaching careers which should build camaraderie, professionalism, and collegiality in schools.

### **Procedures**

This is a quantitative non-experimental study using a survey instrument. The quantitative method focuses on controlling a small number of variables to determine relationships and the strengths of those relationships (Mills, 2003). According to Creswell (2009), the purpose of survey research is to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about the perceptions of that particular population. This is the appropriate method for this study, because the researcher studied a sample that represented a population, used preconceived concepts and theories to determine the appropriate data to be collected, used statistical methods to analyze the collected data, and prepared objective reports of the research findings (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The purpose of this study was to determine the types of decisions certified elementary teachers are likely to participate in making and to determine if a relationship existed between decision types and years of teaching experience.

In this study, there are two variables. The independent variable is the years of teaching experience, which is the variable that caused, influenced, or affected the outcome (Creswell, 2009). The dependent variable is the types of decisions that teachers are likely to participate in making, which is the variable that depends on the independent

variable (Creswell, 2009). These variables were used to answer the research questions using statistical analysis.

The survey instrument, *Teacher Decision Survey* (see Appendix B), was used to collect data for this study. The survey instrument was created by the researcher based on the literature. It included nine types of school level decisions which are curriculum development, evaluation, general school administration, instructional coordination, personnel, policy making, rules and discipline, school improvement, and staff development. The survey took certified elementary teachers approximately fifteen minutes to complete as it consisted of 45 decision items, two demographic questions, and two open-ended questions, and it was completed by teachers using paper and pencil. This process resulted in a rapid turnaround in data collection of the approximately 320 certified elementary teachers who volunteered to participate in the survey.

The survey was made available to certified elementary teachers in one suburban Georgia school district at 10 elementary schools during faculty meetings. Although all teachers that were present were requested to conduct the survey, participation in the study was voluntary. The surveys were completed at the school site and were distributed and collected by the researcher. The survey was anonymous and respondents were only identified by their range of years of teaching experience and current position.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Certified Elementary Teacher* – A certified elementary teacher is defined as a teacher who has completed a certified education program and has earned certification through a state certification commission to teach elementary age children.

*Curriculum Development* – Curriculum development is defined as decisions related to the

activities such as conceptualizing, planning, implementing, field testing, and researching that are intended to produce new curricula or improve existing ones (Education.com, 2011).

*Decision-Making* – Decision-making is defined as the process of choosing from among alternatives (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2007).

*Evaluation* – Evaluation is defined as decisions related to assessment and value. It is the engagement in processes to provide information that help educators make judgments (Kizlik, 2012).

*General School Administration* – General school administration is defined as decisions related to the responsibilities to ensure the highest level of academic achievement and standards with the school. The responsibilities include managing faculty and staff, allocating funds appropriately, and preparing annual budgets (DirectoryofSchools.com, 2011).

*Instructional Coordination* – Instructional coordination is defined as decisions related to the ability to provide direction, coordination, and resources for the improvement of curriculum and instruction (Education.com, 2011).

*Job Satisfaction* – Job satisfaction is defined as a person's perception of his or her work place conditions (Corbell, Osborne, & Reiman, 2010).

*Personnel* – Personnel is defined as decisions related to teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, media specialists, and other support staff who are employed by a school (USLegal.com, 2011).

*Policy Making* – Policy making is defined as decisions related to the activity of deciding on new policies (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

*Rules and Discipline* – Rules and discipline are defined as decisions related to ensuring the safety of students and staff and creating an environment conducive to learning (USLegal.com, 2011).

*School Improvement* – School improvement is defined as decisions related to efforts that support and facilitate schools to increase student achievement by providing quality teaching and assisting schools in developing, implementing, and monitoring school goals (Georgia Department of Education, 2012).

*Staff Development* – Staff development is defined as decisions related to the processes, programs, and activities through which every organization develops, enhances, and improves the skills, competencies, and overall performance of its employees (Dutta, 2011).

*Years of Experience* – Years of experience is defined as the actual number of years of teaching experience a teacher has completed. For the purpose of this study, the years of experience are categorized into five experience groups which are less than 3 years, 3 to 9 years, 10 to 20 years, 21 to 29 years, and 30 to 30 plus years (U. S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2007).

### **Chapter Summary**

Decision-making is an important process in every organization. In schools, administrators and teachers should collaborate to make decisions for the good of the stakeholders. Teachers should have the autonomy to make decisions that they believe are in the best interests of their students, schools, and profession. Through decision-making participation, teachers gain a sense of professionalism, value, and respect.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the types of decisions that teachers are likely to participate in making at their schools. Using a survey, certified elementary teachers ranked a variety of decision items to determine whether they were likely to participate in that particular decision or not. Teachers were identified by their years of teaching experience. An analysis was conducted to determine if a teacher's years of experience had a relationship on the types of decisions they were likely to participate in making.

Through this study, administrators are able to gain a better understanding of which decisions should be delegated to teachers. The results provide a hierarchy of types of decisions that teachers are most interested in participating in making at varying stages of their years of experience. Administrators who are aware of the types of decisions that teachers are likely to participate in making can build environments of respect, trust, professionalism, and collaboration in their schools.

## CHAPTER 2

### SELECTED REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

Teachers are the largest professional group in schools, have the most direct contact with students, and have enormous influence on the environments of schools (Lambert, 1998). When teachers feel satisfied with their profession and achievements, they have tremendous positive influences on their students and on the schools' environments. Involving teachers in decisions increases job satisfaction and produces greater commitment to their schools (Barth, 1990; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Connors, 2000; Donaldson, 2006; Keung, 2008); however, as years of teaching experience increase, the types of decisions teachers are likely to participate in may change.

Two renowned educators recognized the need for teachers to be involved in decision-making. Dewey (1903) stated:

Until the public school system is organized in such a way that every teacher has some regular and representative way in which he or she can register judgment upon matters of educational importance, with the assurance that this judgment will somehow affect the school system, the assertion that the present system is not . . . democratic seems to be justified. (p. 195)

Maslow (1965) noted that people like to participate in their own fate. He postulated that when people are given sufficient information, they make wise decisions about their own lives.

There are myriads of decisions made in schools every day. This background discusses decision-making theories, structures, and practices. It contains information on the importance of teachers' willingness to participate in school decisions and the reasons

why participation is beneficial to school culture. Years of teaching experience and how teachers evolve throughout their teaching experiences are also discussed. Each of these topics is researched to show the importance of decision-making, value of school-based decisions, and degree of motivation involved in decision-making, as well as to gain a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of decision-making based on their years of teaching experience.

### **Decision-Making**

Decision-making is viewed as one of the most important factors upon which the survival of organizations is based (Hengpiya, 2008). This is a difficult concept, because every decision has a consequence (Donaldson, Marnik, Mackenzie, & Ackerman, 2009). Decision-making has been universally defined as the process of choosing from among alternatives, and it plays an important role in motivation, leadership, communication, and organizational change (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2007). Teachers and school administrators desire for schools to embody more authentic adaptive responses, open communication and decision-making, and a culture of learning (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). Villarreal (2005) stated that decision-making in schools was about making informed choices for solutions to classroom problems and situations.

Vroom and Yetton's Decision-Making Model (1973) determined that there were four styles of leader decision-making: autocratic, consultative, group, and delegation. Autocratic decision-making occurred when the leader made the decisions without any stakeholder input. Consultative decision-making occurred when the leader consulted with others and then made decisions with or without consideration of others. Group decision-making occurred when a group assembled to discuss the issues along with



possible solutions, and then the group made decisions. Delegation decision-making occurred when the leader delegated the decisions to others and then the leader stepped back and allowed the decisions to be made (Hengpiya, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2007).

Like Vroom and Yetton, Conzemius and O'Neill (2002) had four possible decision-making options, which included consensus decisions, voting, consultative decisions, and command decisions. Consensus decisions required that all members of the team agreed to support the group's decisions once the final decisions had been made. This required that each team member was heard, valued, and considered in the solution and that full support and commitment was attained in order to successfully implement the decisions.

Voting was another decision-making option. When a group needed an explicit approach due to time constraints or determined that it was not necessary for everyone to agree on the outcome, a vote would be an appropriate action. Voting was appropriate when the stakes were relatively low, the group was large, time was of the essence, and commitment to the decision was less important than achieving the solution (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002).

Consultative decisions were another option in decision-making. This option allowed for broader input, but the decision was made by a representative of the group after the individual had gathered advice, input, or expertise from others. This process worked best when each member of the team did not have to be involved in making the decision, the group trusted its representatives to make a reasonable decision, and the outside input enhanced the decision and commitment (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002).

Command decisions were another decision option, and this referred to decisions made by only one person who had authority, knowledge, power, or status to make the decisions. Command decisions were appropriate to be used when relatively quick actions were necessary, when the consequences of not acting would be harmful, when the decisions were consistent with already defined plans or laws, when the leader was willing to take full responsibility for the results, and when the team agreed to allow one person to make the decisions (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002).

Administrators understand that whichever type of decision model they chose, they are ultimately responsible for the outcomes of decisions made at their schools (Blase & Kirby, 2000); however, collaboration is needed to convert the decisions into actions or the decisions merely remain good intentions (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Reeves, 2006; Rooney, 2010). DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) and Gabriel, Day, and Allington (2011) stated that many times administrators objected to allowing teachers to have the authority to make important instructional decisions, and administrators blamed the hierarchy of the organization and insisted that administrators must make the decisions because they were ultimately responsible for the consequences. Gabriel (2005) stated that some leaders think they must always find a resolution because they believed that was what leaders had to do; however, sometimes withholding a solution could be a valuable strategy especially if the stakeholders had not been given the opportunity to express their ideas about the decision. Blase and Kirby (2000) indicated that studies have shown how administrators who have allowed teachers direct participation in decision-making have built trust in their schools. Involvement in decision-making by those who were affected by the actions of the decisions was used (a) to create faculty unity, (b) to improve morale,

(c) to engender support for decisions, and (d) to improve the quality of decisions. Large numbers of teachers, however, stated that they have not been involved in decisions at the school level (Keung, 2008; Senate Teacher Morale Study Committee Summary of Findings, 2000). Effective administrators needed to include teachers in decisions, because in schools where sharing and collaboration were authentic, trust was developed through open, concise, and direct discussions (Connors, 2000; Donaldson, 2006; Robbins & Alvy, 2004).

There is a menagerie of ways to make decisions, because decision-making can be accomplished through a variety of processes; however, the main ingredient of effective collaborative decision-making was for the team of decision-makers to be explicit about its process and to select the right process for the situation. Collaborative decision-making was effective (a) when the decisions required diverse and creative ideas, (b) when many viewpoints were needed to understand the problem, (c) when a fundamental change was likely, and (d) when many people shared the same problem (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002). In collaborative decision-making, it was imperative that the input be listened to and acknowledged by the group because as teachers learned and made decisions, they improved together and developed cultures of camaraderie, trust, responsibility, and accountability (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008).

### **Models of Educational Decision-Making**

School leaders should involve teachers in the school's decision-making processes and empower individuals to act (Anderson, 2002; Donaldson, 2006; Keung, 2008; Knight, 2011). Teachers who were engaged in their work tended to have students who were engaged in learning (Lopez, 2011). Involving others in decision-making processes

and empowering them were two of the most significant and effective strategies used by competent leaders (DuFour et al., 2008). Robbins and Alvy (2004) reinforced the idea of collaboration when they stated that meaningful and quality human relationships were a key to a successful organization. Maxwell (1993) stated that when people lacked ownership of a decision, they usually resisted it, even when it was in their best interest. They simply did not like the decision or the idea of being manipulated. Wise leaders allowed others to provide input and be a part of the decision-making process. Connors (2000) believed that one of the biggest frustrations to teachers was being asked to give input on decisions when the final decisions had already been predetermined. Effective leaders should ensure that when input was solicited it was considered. Randolph-Robinson (2007) maintained that administrators who used a participatory style of leadership were likely to have more satisfied and effective teachers than administrators who used an autocratic style of leadership.

Even though schools tend to make decisions based on a trial-and error basis rather than by scientific design (Lindahl, 2006), shared decision-making empowered teachers to play a greater role in the leadership of a school, brought decision-making authority to the classroom, and gave teachers a sense of responsibility and ownership in the school. Involving teachers in true decision-making built leadership that impacted student learning (Anderson, 2002; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006) and influenced the climate and culture of the school (Gabriel et al., 2011; Lindahl, 2006). When teachers were knowledgeable, decision-making was more accurate and less risky when entrusted to a diverse group than to an individual (Donaldson, 2006; Keung, 2008; Reeves, 2006). However, decision-making processes should have a protocol or procedure because when teachers viewed

decision-making as an informal process, it lead to suspicion and perceptions of favoritism (Huysman, 2008).

Somech (2005) defined the dimensions of decision-making by examining five specific dimensions, which were decision, degree of participation, structure, target of participation, and rationale. The decision dimension involved teachers dealing with student instruction, managerial issues, school operations, and administration. The second dimension, degree of participation, described the degree of involvement teachers have in the decision-making process. The third dimension, participating management structure, established a participatory structure for decision-making within a school. Some administrators preferred a participatory structure that was informal where there were few rules determining who participated and how participation occurred. Others established a more formal participation management structure where teachers were more directly involved in making decisions. The fourth dimension, participation target, suggested that when an administrator had developed a level of trust and loyalty, teachers were provided more responsibility. The fifth dimension, rationale, justified why a school had embraced participatory management. This dimension suggested that the rationale for participatory management represented the administrator's leadership philosophy and rational for employing participatory management.

Based on Keung's (2008) research, there were three levels of decision participation: the individual level, the group level, and the organizational level. The individual level included issues closely related to the individual teacher's performance within the classroom such as choice of teaching materials, teaching schedules, and student assessment. The group level included issues related to the functioning of groups

such as event planning and collaboration. The organizational level included issues at the school level which included school goals, school budgets, admission policies, personnel management, and development planning.

At the organizational level when administrators were viewed by teachers as instructional leaders, teachers were allowed to make decisions, their opinions were sought, and their expertise was acknowledged and shared. Their classrooms were not isolated islands of success but were connected to the rest of the school. However, when administrators were viewed as low-supporting, teachers stated that they made decisions simply because administrators did not. When teachers were able to engage in decision-making, they felt supported, trusted, and valued as professionals (Gabriel et al., 2011). Mehta, Gardia, and Rathore (2010) agreed that participative decision-making lead teachers to feel respected and empowered. Participation built trust, helped teachers acquire new skills, increased school effectiveness, and strengthened staff morale, commitment and team work.

In order to better facilitate decision-making processes, administrators and teachers organized committees around specific decision issues where they collaboratively studied the issues, created action plans, implemented the plans, and monitored the successes (Mihans, 2008; Rooney, 2010). Administrators formed governance groups such as leadership teams of representative faculty and staff. These members were the decision-makers, and, through this collaboration, teachers and administrators productively made decisions (Lambert, 1998; Straham & Hedt, 2009). This group made decisions on a variety of things including the agendas for faculty meetings, differentiated lessons, integrated content, quality student assessments, and opportunities for feedback (Rooney,

2010; Straham & Hedt, 2009). This team also developed meaningful school improvement plans and assessed building needs compared to the plan (Rooney, 2010). A leadership team was a decision-making body that was a collaborative learning community that focused solely on supporting the improvement of student achievement at their school (Georgia Department of Education, 2004). The leadership team operated in such a way as it provided strong guidance while demonstrating respect for those not on the team. Together, teachers made decisions about planning, designing, preparing, analyzing, evaluating, and teaching which improved professional performance (Georgia Department of Education, 2004). Much was accomplished when administrators and teachers worked cooperatively, and teachers were allowed to work together to make decisions with few mandates (Gabriel et al., 2011). Teachers should take every opportunity to be part of the leadership teams and advisory boards, because by taking an active role, it tended to promote shared leadership between administrators and teachers (Mihans, 2008; Robbins & Alvy, 2004).

Collaboration with colleagues was a key factor in continued professional growth as teachers communicated in decision-making processes to integrate new ideas into the work of their classrooms (Straham & Hedt, 2009). Maxwell (1993) stated that employees should be involved in decision-making, because employees resisted change when they heard about it from another source. When a decision had been made, the longer it took for employees to hear and the further the desired change was from the decision-maker, the more resistance it received. That was why decisions should be made at the lowest level possible. The decision-maker that was closest to the issue should make a better

decision, and people affected by the decision should hear it from the source closest to them and to the issue which should improve communication.

The decision-makers in education are many. Teachers do not always have positive attitudes about external regulations and external decisions. While public school accountability and curricular mandates vary from state to state and district to district, top-down directives in many cases have left teachers feeling marginalized. The increased regulations of teachers' work has had a negative effect on teachers' professional self-image and tended to cause burnout (Dever & Carlston, 2009). Expert teachers were decision-makers and identified decisions that were important and which decisions were less important (Hattie, 2002). Other decision-makers include politicians, community leaders, and school stakeholders. Fowler (2000) explained that even though the legislature as a whole is influential in relation to educational policy, individual legislators are the most important actors in the educational policy decision process. Usually, the most influential legislators are members of the education committee. Every state legislature has at least one education committee. The committees develop education laws, review existing legislation, and hold hearings on education policy issues.

State Boards of Education make educational decisions. They (a) develop and approve rules and regulations used in implementing education laws enacted by the legislator, (b) develop certification requirements of K-12 teachers and administrators, (c) approve and monitor educational assessment programs, (d) decide on minimum high school graduation requirements, (e) determine accreditation standards, and (f) serve as the final step in the appeals process for administrative redress cases (Fowler, 2000).



Additional decision-makers also exist. Local school boards are agencies of the state government that make education decisions. State and local school superintendents make decisions on education. Interest groups make decisions on education. Also, the media should not be considered neutral as it sets agendas which often lead to policy decisions (Fowler, 2000).

### **Shared Decision-Making**

Shared decision-making is referred to by many names including school-based management and shared governance. The rationale of shared decision-making was that those who were closest to the situation were best equipped to make the decisions (Lashway, 2003; Robbins & Alvy, 2004). In shared decision-making, administrators collaborated with teachers to take actions targeted at improving instruction and school climate. Shared decision-making improved student learning, increased teacher satisfaction, and developed skills of leadership (Anderson, 2002; Lashway, 2003), and it moved teachers out of isolation into norms that reinforced collaboration with a purpose for engaging in collaborative work (Robbins & Alvy, 2004).

Blase and Kirby (2000) stated that the process of shared decision-making significantly strengthened support for decisions and improved faculty morale. Effective practices in shared decision-making included that it was more likely to address important decisions when (a) teachers' concerns were resolved first fostering trust in the process and facilitating a more professional culture, (b) teachers were able to focus their own work through formal structures from goal setting, determining agendas, and reaching decisions, (c) teachers were involved in prioritizing concerns, and (d) teachers could declare a stake in the outcomes.

Through shared decision-making, teachers associated greater commitment, honesty, collegiality, and focus with their increased sense of belonging (Blase & Kirby, 2000). This type of professional collaboration required time, practice, and accountability (Reeves, 2009). For shared decision-making to be effective and for a school climate to meet the needs of its teachers, school administrators must realize that when they created an atmosphere where people were truly involved, the leader did not have total control because the responsibility was shared. The focus was on what needed to be accomplished and how to do it effectively. The more teachers felt involved, the more they participated, shared the mission and vision, and shared the positive attributes of the decision (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Connors, 2000). However, ensuring that teachers had meaningful choices and decision opportunities did not mean that teachers were free to do as they pleased (Knight, 2011). Blase and Kirby (2000) found that administrators who practiced shared school-based decision-making had a positive impact on increasing teacher motivation, confidence, ownership, reflection, commitment, risk taking, autonomy, and teaching efficacy.

With shared decision-making, teacher involvement was viewed as a facilitator to better decisions, because those closest to the students knew best how to improve their schools and were in the best positions to make and to apply decisions (Lashway, 2003). Keung (2008) stated that participation in decision-making was seen as motivational to the participants as it released their energy, responsibility, and initiative which resulted in greater commitment to the job and increased job satisfaction. Participation was seen to encourage teachers to assume more responsibility for occurrences in schools which

increased teachers' ownership of change, allowed teachers voice in school policies, and made better use of their professional expertise.

According to Keung (2008), shared decision-making improved teachers' satisfaction especially when teachers had substantive roles rather than advisory roles. Shared decision-making created greater commitment to the school with increased participation in the decision-making process. Although, the incorporation of shared decision-making involved additional work load due to increased meetings and responsibilities, when teachers were the final decision-makers, it increased the likelihood that teachers would not resist change initiatives (Knight, 2011).

Lashway (2003) stated that shared decision-making produced both benefits and problems. The administrators' role was crucial as they had to be willing to transition from traditional authority roles to allowing teachers to have a greater voice by helping to prepare teachers, providing support to teachers, and establishing an environment of trust. When the balance of power was not collaborative and open to collective decision-making, the school experienced pitfalls as (a) rules replaced trust, (b) communication became constrained, (c) problems were hidden, (d) management became intrusive, and (e) cooperation was withheld (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). If the process threatened to become negative, administrators needed to be ready to intervene, but they must understand that too much of a hands-off approach could be viewed as indifference yet being too assertive could undermine collaboration. Key lessons for administrators using shared decision-making included (a) being as clear as possible about new procedures for making decisions, (b) providing time for teachers to make decisions,

(c) providing adequate training for faculty and staff, and (d) facilitating the plans of action (Lashway, 2003).

### **Types of School Level Decisions**

There are a multitude of decisions made at the school level every day. These decisions can be categorized into the following types: instructional coordination, curriculum development, general school administration, rules and discipline, policy making, staff development, evaluation, personnel, and school improvement (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980). Connors (2000) reported that teachers should be included in decisions about budget, scheduled activities, and meetings. Somech (2005) stated that teachers should be involved in decisions dealing with student instruction, managerial issues, school operations, and administration. Administrators and teachers should work together to make the best decisions possible for the well-being of the students, faculty, staff, school, and community.

To better define the parameters of the types of decisions identified by Duke et al. (1980), a sampling of the actual decisions in each type is important to understand. Instructional coordination included decisions on instructional tools, class roster levels, standards-based instructional strategies, technology applications, and field trip enhancements to instruction. Curriculum development included decisions concerning lesson plans, supplemental materials, textbook usage, and actual standards to be taught. General school administration included decisions on school budgets, managerial matters, and calendar creation. Rules and discipline included classroom rules and procedures, school-wide discipline plans, and rewards and consequences for students. Policy making included expectations of employees such as dress code, work hours, forms to be used,

and grading procedures. Staff development included decisions concerning professional learning such as topics, frequency, manner presented, and audience. Evaluation included decisions concerning teacher and student evaluations and assessments such as feedback, expectations, tools used, and scoring instruments. Personnel included teacher assignments such as grade level taught, teammates, department representation, school location, and administrator selection. School improvement included decisions concerning teacher and student goals, student data, and the creation of school improvement plans.

### **Teacher Perceptions of School-Based Decision-Making**

Most teachers are interested in being actively involved in decision-making processes at the school level, such as those dealing with professional development, curriculum, and the general procedures associated with the school (Huysman, 2008). According to Boyd, Grossman, and Ing et al. (2011), teachers appeared to derive greater satisfaction from their work and were more likely to stay in teaching when they perceived themselves to have greater autonomy. Teachers were more likely to stay in schools where they had the opportunity to contribute to school-wide decision-making which included decisions about scheduling, selection of materials, and selection of professional development experiences. In a study of more than 50,000 Chicago public school teachers, it was found that teachers were more likely to stay in schools where they had influence over school decisions.

Lynch (2010) stated that a gap in perception existed between teachers and administrators regarding teacher involvement in decision-making as administrators believed they engaged teachers in decision-making processes at the schools; however,

general teachers' perceptions were that administrators made the majority of decisions and teachers made only a few. Reeves (2006) argued that decision-making occurred at three levels. Level I involved decisions that allowed for individual discretion. In schools, teachers had discretion in choosing their teaching practices which was proven by the variety of curriculum content and instructional strategies viewed from one classroom to the next. Level II decisions involved decisions that were collaborative, because teachers and administrators sought common ground and agreement. Level III decisions involved decisions that were made by leaders and usually were issues involving safety and values. In a study of 2,000 teachers, teachers were surveyed and asked to identify which level of decision-making was most common in their profession. The majority of respondents predicted that the greatest percentage of decisions were at Level III where the leaders made the decisions. After the survey was conducted, respondents were asked to list the decisions that they believed teachers had discretion; these were decisions at Level I with only a few listed at Level II and Level III. As a result of the categorization of their decisions, the actual decision practices were the opposite of the teachers' prediction: 39% of the actual decisions were at Level I; 34% were at Level II; and, 27% were at Level III. The teachers were surprised at the amount of decision-making power they had at Level I and Level II. The findings indicated that the majority of decisions in schools were either collaborative or discretionary teacher decisions.

During the 2000 Session of the Georgia General Assembly, the Senate Teacher Morale Study Committee was created and charged with conducting a study of teacher morale. The prevalent concerns of the study included that most teachers believed that the profession had lost respect from the community, and teachers believed they should be

treated like professionals. Teachers believed they were not included in decision-making processes at any level, and they believed that the government made decisions without adequate information as to the impact of those decisions on students and teachers.

One of the paradoxes of the education system is that teachers have been entrusted with one of the country's greatest resources, the children, and then they are treated like overgrown children and are not allowed to make their own decisions (Schmidt, 2002). When professionals are told what to do, when to do it, and how to do it, with no room for their own decisions or individual thoughts, there is a good chance they are not dedicated to the decisions (Knight, 2011). Teachers recognized the inherent unfairness of a system that asked them to be accountable for results but provided them with little or no opportunity to make the decisions that affected those results (DuFour et al., 2008). Often educators were detached from the results of their teachings because they had little voice in the decisions leading to those results. They teach a curriculum that has been developed by someone else, use textbooks and materials selected by someone else, adhere to a pace and sequence determined by someone else, and use assessment instruments chosen by someone else (DuFour et al., 2008). Teachers felt they lacked autonomy as decision-makers in their classrooms. They felt that districts mandated instructional programs and the amount of time spent on those programs (Dever & Carlston, 2009).

Teachers feel underappreciated by their administrators (Donaldson, 2006). Whitaker (2003) emphasized that teachers need autonomy which was defined as the freedom to do the things they knew were best for their students, their profession, and their schools. This involved making decisions and feeling confident in knowing that the decisions would be supported and appreciated once they were acted on. Zepeda (2003)

stated that teachers often perceived greater autonomy when they had authority. Teachers who collectively engaged in participatory decision-making were better able to deliver rigorous and relevant learning for all students and personalize learning for individual students (Stumbo & McWalters, 2010). Ironically, teachers experienced a greater degree of satisfaction when they were allowed to make individual decisions about what occurred in their classrooms rather than when they were participating in school-wide decisions that required collaborative input (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Villarreal, 2005).

Employees want a supervisor who listens to their unique concerns (Murphy (2010)). They wanted to know that leaders were paying attention to the factors that motivated and increased their morale, and that somebody had the empathy to listen to them and to value their ideas (Maxwell, 1993; West, Ainscow, & Stanford, 2005). By involving teachers in decision-making, trust could be built, because when teachers had a voice they felt they could express their ideas and opinions (Knight, 2011). Covey (2004) reiterated that trust was the glue of organizations. Through trust, teachers felt valued and respected.

Teachers were satisfied at schools where they were treated like professionals and were respected by their administrators. Teachers participating in the decisions were more satisfied with their jobs than teachers that had less autonomy. Teachers experienced a significant voice over the workings of the school, knew their voices were valued, and listened to the voices of others more actively as they participated in decisions at the school level (Knight, 2011; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Pilcher & Largue, 2009). The more teachers were involved in the decision-making process at the school level, the more satisfied teachers were in their jobs (Anderson, 2002; Keung, 2008; Lynch, 2010).



According to Mehta et al. (2010), teachers' actual and desired participation was found to be highest in institutional decisions and lowest in technical decisions. Teachers were at different levels of decisional participation in managerial, technical, and institutional domains. Teachers were indifferent, insensitive, or ambivalent towards decisions taken in their organizations.

### **Teacher Willingness to Participate in Decision-Making**

Teachers make thousands of decisions each day (Robbins & Alvy, 2004). There are decisions that teachers may not want to be involved in making. According to Donaldson (2006), school employees often were content to have someone else handle the contentious and mundane organizational work of the school. This work ranged widely from upset parents to school budgets or central office initiatives to scheduling or disciplinary challenges. Also, the idea that teachers should teach and administrators should permit teachers to do the important work of teaching without being mired into organizational chaos worked against collective involvement in decision-making. In situations where distrust was believed to be present by the teachers and teachers felt undervalued and alienated to start with, teacher participation in decision-making was difficult to attain.

Teachers must do more than simply participate in decision-making (Anderson, 2002). Research (e.g. Anderson, 2002; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Donaldson, 2006; Keung, 2008; Lashway, 2003) has shown that when teachers were involved in decisions at the school level, they became more satisfied in their jobs, more effectively worked with colleagues and administrators, and shared ownership of a common mission and vision. Teachers should be provided leadership opportunities and should be empowered to

participate and lead in the school and beyond the classroom (Anderson, 2002). Teachers have the right to offer opinions, suggestions, and make decisions on the schools' educational teaching and administrative work and to participate in the schools' democratic administration through teacher collaboration (Fuming & Jiliang, 2007). However, it must be the teachers' choice to collaborate and participate with others or to join in with decision-making. It should not be an obligation (Donaldson, 2006) as teachers may choose to participate in decision-making because they can, they want to, and they can make a difference (Anderson, 2002).

When teachers were allowed to have ownership of professional decision-making, they developed the confidence to take risks and believed they were better able to achieve student progress. Teachers showed application of decision-making skills when they could (a) demonstrate the steps of making appropriate decisions, (b) support decisions with research-based knowledge or experience, (c) demonstrate that alternative actions were considered, and (d) show that a decision's anticipated impacts were made before implementation (Villarreal, 2005).

Lynch (2010) emphasized the benefits of involving teachers in decision-making at their schools which included teachers' feelings of self-efficacy, ownership, and workplace democracy. Teachers were more likely to comply with decisions if they were involved in the decision-making process, and being involved helped teachers gain an appreciation for the operations of a school. When teachers were involved in decision-making, there were several benefits which included (a) changes in attitudes and patterns of behavior, (b) increase in teacher participation, (c) decrease in barriers of authority and isolation, and (d) increase in understanding of one another. Anderson (2002) stated that a

teacher's actual influence on decision-making was related to the perception that the teacher's participation was having a result and making a difference.

Participation in decision-making encouraged teacher involvement and teacher commitment to the organization as teachers felt that their work was more satisfying and helped administrators fulfill their responsibilities (Anderson, 2002; Donaldson, 2006; Fuming & Jiliang, 2007). Teacher participation in decision-making promoted commitment to the decisions made and increased a teacher's willingness to carry out the decisions. Teachers began to take ownership of their decisions by initiating their own ideas and became empowered with a sense of ownership in the change process by participating in decision-making processes (Ge, Lubin, & Zhang, 2010; Somech, 2005).

Through shared decision-making, every member had ownership in the decisions that were made. The ability to make decisions was directly related to trust and relationships among the faculty. In shared decision-making, stakeholders had a voice, but administrators maintained veto power as there was a fine line between shared decision-making and abdicating authority and responsibility. Leaders must provide the vision and directions and be a part of the process (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007).

Keung (2008) stated that teacher involvement in decision-making could lead to more job satisfaction and work commitment. Teachers had greater desire to participate in instructional decisions than in curricular and managerial decisions. Teachers expressed more desire for participation in decisions that related to classroom instruction than for participation in school level administrative and management decisions. Teachers built capacity in their profession when they had a strong knowledge base of content and pedagogy, a sense of self-efficacy, reasoning skills to make informed decisions, and the

ability to evaluate, reflect, and adjust decisions (Villarreal, 2005). When teachers did not believe their involvement was influential, their involvement declined, as did their overall job satisfaction and commitment (Keung, 2008).

According to Blase and Kirby (2000), being involved in school based decisions in a meaningful way had a positive impact on teachers; however, teachers did have some negative feelings due to extra demands on their time, especially when they believed the decisions to be inconsequential. When teachers believed their time was being wasted on mundane and routine matters, they were likely to resent involvement. Anderson (2002) stated that some of the constraints to teacher involvement in decision-making included (a) lack of time, (b) lack of training and support, (c) isolation, (d) lack of change skills, (e) lack of real authority, (f) uncertainty about excellence, and (g) information overload.

Decision-making at the school site was viewed as time consuming. Involving teachers in decision-making efforts detracted from the instructional program by diverting attention, draining energy, and reducing actual teaching time. Teachers became frustrated when the increased work load was the result of school management tasks which were mostly managerial and when teachers perceived that they were trading planning time for administrative tasks. Teachers believed they were not part of the process of decision-making when their ideas were not valued and their voices were not heard (Knight, 2011). Teachers needed assurance that others heard them and that their ideas had been communicated, because involvement of teachers in decision-making was worth the effort as it created job commitment, ownership, and a sense of empowerment.

## **Job Satisfaction and Motivation**

Teachers became teachers to fulfill an altruistic desire and motivation to serve society (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Hargreaves and Shirley (2008) described the principles of professionalism in education to include high-quality teachers. Teachers were (a) attracted by an inspiring and inclusive vision, (b) enthralled by their passions to become builders of the students' futures, (c) attracted to supportive and satisfying work conditions and professional decision-making, and (d) trained to rigorous, intellectual, and practical standards. Wilson (2011) opined that quality teaching was motivated by (a) the schools where teachers work, (b) the materials teachers had available for use, and (c) the communities of professionals that surrounded them. Perrachione et al. (2008) concluded that when teachers had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues, received recognition from supervisors and administrators, served in leadership roles, and improved their professional skills and abilities, they were significantly more satisfied with their role as teachers than those who did not have these experiences. Also, negative work experiences which included lack of student interest and professional autonomy were found to have a negative influence on teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction.

Keung (2008) determined that participation in decision-making increased teachers' levels of satisfaction in teaching and enthusiasm for the educational system and created positive attitudes towards participation. Decision-making required motivation on the part of the participants in order for the process to be meaningful and the results to be of value. It was believed that shared decision-making was a meaningful way to combat low morale as it increased motivation and job satisfaction (Fowler, 2000). However, commitment and enthusiasm, both of which were essential components of job

satisfaction, were compromised when teachers perceived that their experience, talents, and expertise were dismissed, ignored, or underutilized (Huysman, 2008).

Although job satisfaction has been extensively studied in business and industry, little research has focused on attitudes and beliefs related to job satisfaction and motivation of teachers (Huysman, 2008). Three researchers, Herzberg, Maslow, and Vroom, developed studies that demonstrated aspects of how individuals felt about job satisfaction and self-worth which, in turn, affected the way they participated in decision-making. In these studies, job satisfaction referred to the degree of satisfaction a worker felt about the work in which he or she was engaged. Usually, people continued to work in the organization if they felt sufficiently satisfied. Otherwise, they quit working or behaved poorly (Fuming & Jiliang, 2008). Herzberg's (1968) research indicated that factors affecting job satisfaction were different from factors relating to job dissatisfaction. Herzberg defined the job satisfiers as motivators and the hygiene factors as the cause of unhappiness. Herzberg developed a theory known as the Two-Factor Motivation-Hygiene theory based on a study of employees' job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. His motivation-hygiene theory suggested that the motivating factors which were intrinsic to the job were (a) achievement, (b) recognition for achievement, (c) the work itself, (d) responsibility, and (e) growth or advancement. Indicators of job dissatisfaction or hygiene factors included extrinsic entities such as (a) company policy, (b) salary, (c) status, (d) job security, (e) fringe benefits, (f) the type of supervision, (g) working conditions, (h) climate of work group, and (i) attitudes and policies of administration. The difference between the motivators and hygiene factors was the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction within each factor. Motivating factors caused positive job attitudes that

satisfied employees' needs for self-actualization (Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2007). According to Guarino et al. (2006), the most important reason teachers left the profession was job dissatisfaction due to low salaries, lack of support from school administrators, and student discipline problems. Huysman (2008) stated that high levels of job satisfaction and lower level of dissatisfaction had positive implications for improving student achievement. In Huysman's study, the data confirmed that multiple factors influenced job satisfaction with intrinsic satisfaction factors being the best predictors of overall job satisfaction. Study participants, which were teachers, indicated that security, activity, social service, variety, and ability utilization were the intrinsic factors that ranked highest in contributing to job satisfaction, and the extrinsic factors of recognition, company policies, opportunities for advancement, co-workers, and compensation most influenced dissatisfaction.

Teachers often stated that they were unsupported by their administrators and that they craved effective administrators who made an effort to become involved in supporting teachers by creating environments in which positive support was apparent, teachers were valued and heard, and teachers' needs were met (Mihans, 2008). Another motivation theory was Maslow's (1970) hierarchical framework for understanding human motivation. He believed that human needs must be met in sequential order and that the previous need had to be met before the next higher one could be addressed (Schunk, 2008; Woolfork, 2010). His hierarchy of needs indicated that motivation of human action progressed in a specific order. First, physiological needs had to be met, which involved satisfying biological demands. Once physiological needs were met, safety needs had to be met, which involved individuals seeking comfort and a regulated

environment. Once safety needs were met, then belonging and love needed to be met, as individuals sought involvement with others as a group member or a partner. Next, once belonging and love needs were met, esteem needs had to be met as individuals desired to move from acceptance within a group to become a contributing and leading member in a group. Finally, once esteem needs were met, self-actualization could be accomplished, which meant the individual was viewed as successful in the eyes of others (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 1996; Lynch, 2010; Schunk, 2008).

Another motivational theory which can be associated with decision-making is expectancy theory. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory was grounded in four assumptions. The first assumption was that people joined organizations with expectations about their needs, motivation, and experiences. The second assumption was that an individual's behavior was the result of conscious choice as people were free to choose those behaviors suggested by their own expectations. The third assumption was that people wanted different things from the organization such as job security, promotion, and challenge. The fourth assumption was that people chose among alternatives so as to optimize outcomes for them personally (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2007). People choose to participate in decisions based on what they expected to obtain from the results. Teachers appreciated the autonomy and the ability to be involved in decision-making. They expected to work in environments where they could make choices and had flexible opportunities for growth. When teachers were given autonomy, teachers remained in the profession (Mihans, 2008).



## **Years of Teaching Experience**

The number of years that a person teaches is called a teacher's *years of experience*. As teachers gained years of experience, they were perceived to gain knowledge and skills to better instruct students (Rice, 2010). Tenure and salary were based on teachers' experience levels; however, as teachers evolved, their ideas and perceptions also changed. According to Mehta et al. (2010), teaching experience was significantly related to teachers' perceptions of their actual participation in decisions related to managerial, technical, and instructional issues. The experience attained by teachers made them more worthy than their less experienced teachers in providing input to the departmental policies and practices.

Donaldson (2006) reported that most teachers work in isolation. They spent the vast majority of their days with children, not with colleagues. They devoted an average 47 hours per week at school, and many teachers found that the emotional and physical investments of teaching left them too exhausted for other activities. Even when teachers recognized the need for collaboration and professional development with colleagues, they found it difficult to find the time or the energy for these activities. Having survived the initial years, many teachers were not eager to make themselves vulnerable to others by sharing what they did or by admitting deficiencies. Pilcher and Largue (2009) stated that teachers started their careers eager to teach and learn, only to lose momentum, become fatigued, get frustrated, and move into survival mode as they progressed.

Wilson (2011) found that first year teachers were significantly less effective than teachers with more experience, but they improved steadily over the first five years of teaching. Boyd et al. (2011) determined that turnover in teacher positions was higher

among younger and older teachers compared to middle-aged ones and among less experienced teachers compared to more experienced ones. According to Corbell et al. (2010), 50% of beginning teachers left the profession within the first five years which meant that all the resources (money, time, and mentors) that went to support those teachers left with them. Keeping teachers motivated in the profession long enough to grow their craft was an important challenge.

From 1997 to 2007, the average age of Georgia teachers as a whole grew older (Afolabi & Eads, 2009). The average age of teachers increased from 41.51 years of age to 42.04 years of age. This increase may have indicated that more teachers were remaining in their teaching career longer or that older new teachers were joining the teaching work force. During that decade, there was a consistent increase in the percentage of teachers who were reported as being over 61 years of age (Afolabi & Eads, 2009). There was a steady increase in the percentage of teachers who were reported as having over 30 years of teaching experience with a rise from 3.5% in 2004 to 5.5% in 2008 (Afolabi & Eads, 2009). The average years of experience for Georgia teachers was 12.3 years in 2007 (Stephens, 2007).

He and Cooper (2011) stated that beginning teachers brought their personal experiences and beliefs with them into their education programs. These teachers were challenged by conflicts between their personal beliefs and the reality of teaching, along with the struggles that beginning teachers often encountered. Beginning teachers were concerned with administrative support in their decision-making where disciplinary procedures were concerned. Parent involvement was one of the major challenges and new challenges included testing pressure, lack of resources, and balancing professional

and personal lives. According to Corbell et al. (2005), classroom management and discipline decisions were beginning teachers' most serious issues. Factors that impacted a beginning teachers job satisfaction included (a) the grade level taught, (b) teaching in the certified area, (c) students with disabilities, (d) socioeconomic status of the students, (e) class size, (f) number of preparations, and (g) being provided uninterrupted planning time in school.

According to Klassen and Chiu (2010), most teachers with 8 to 23 years of teaching experience demonstrated increases in motivation and commitment, whereas teachers with 24 plus years of teaching experience reported declining motivation. About 4 to 6 years into their teaching careers, teachers entered a period of stabilization, marked by a commitment to the profession. During the years of about 7 to 18, the years of experience were marked by periods of experimentation and activism or reevaluation during which teachers reflected on their careers and questioned their career choices. During years 19 to 30, teachers experienced years of serenity during which they appeared to gradually lose energy and enthusiasm for teaching yet they gained a greater sense of confidence and self-acceptance.

Fuming and Jiliang (2008) argued that teachers with a longer service length were more dissatisfied with self-fulfillment, salary, and collegial service relationships. Teachers became more dissatisfied with every aspect of their work as they grew older. Significant differences among the different age groups in all dimensions of teacher job satisfaction existed, with the exception of satisfaction with school principals. Boyd et al. (2010) also found that teachers' perceptions of the school administrator had the greatest influence on teacher retention and job satisfaction. This effect of administration was

consistent for first-year teachers and the entire sample of teachers in the study. Fuming and Jiliang (2008) also stated that there was a tendency for job satisfaction among elementary teachers to gradually improve with increases in age and length of service. However, according to Perrachione et al. (2008), older and more experienced teachers expressed significantly less satisfaction with their professional role than their younger and less experienced colleagues. This study stated that elementary teachers were more satisfied than secondary teachers, and teachers with higher qualifications tended to be more satisfied than those with lower qualifications.

In Lynch's (2010) study, an examination of the number of years of experience and how teachers rated their decision-making was conducted. The overall data indicated that teachers with 20 or more years of teaching experience were more involved in developing school goals and strategic plans. Regardless of years of teaching experience, teachers agreed that they were not the decision-makers at the school. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers with 2 to 5 years of teaching experience agreed that they were involved in decision-making, while only 55% of the teachers with 13 to 20 years of teaching experience indicated that they were involved in decision-making. Eighty-one percent of the teachers with 20 or more years of experience agreed that they were involved in the decision-making process at their schools. Regardless of the teachers' years of experience, teachers positively rated their autonomy in the classrooms, their involvement in setting standards for the students in their classrooms, and their involvement in the selection of curriculum. Overall, teachers of all years of experience were dissatisfied with not being able to have input in the hiring of new staff members, school budgeting

decisions, developing discipline standards and procedures, and setting standards for student promotion.

Lynch's (2010) study indicated that elementary teachers were more satisfied with their involvement in decision-making at the school level than teachers at the secondary levels. When examining teacher responses to their involvement in the development of the school strategic plans, teachers' responses revealed that elementary teachers were more involved than middle school teachers. Also, overall teachers revealed that they were more involved in making decisions at the classroom level than making decisions that impacted the entire school. The data indicated teachers perceived that they were not involved in making school-wide decisions such as setting school policies, practices and procedures, curriculum decisions, budgeting, hiring new staff, students' discipline standards and procedures, and setting standards of student promotion; however, teachers revealed that they had ample control of the decision-making in their classrooms such as setting standards for their students' work in the classrooms and selecting the curriculum, materials, and equipment.

According to Rice (2010), experience gained over time enhanced the knowledge, skills, and productivity of workers.

In education, teacher experience is probably the key factor in personnel policies that affect current employees; it is a cornerstone of traditional single-salary schedules; it drives teacher transfer policies that prioritize seniority; and it is commonly considered a major source of inequity across schools and therefore, a target for redistribution. The underlying assumption is that experience promotes effectiveness. (p. 1)

Rice contended that teachers showed the greatest productivity gains during their first few years in the classroom, but afterwards their performances tended to level off. Teachers with more than 20 years of experience were more effective than teachers with no experience, but they were not much more effective than those with five years of experience.

### **Chapter Summary**

Decision-making is a complex process. At the school level, administrators must make every effort to involve teachers in the process and help teachers perceive their positions as professionals. There are a variety of decision-making models in the field of education. Each of these models encouraged collaboration by allowing teachers to have involvement to make important school-level decisions. Shared decision-making was a school-based decision-making model that emphasized the importance of those who were closest to the situation being involved in the decision as they were best equipped to make the decision. This model increased support for decisions, improved student learning, increased teacher satisfaction, and improved faculty morale.

The types of school level decisions included (a) instructional coordination, (b) curriculum development, (c) general school administration, (d) rules and discipline, (e) policy making, (f) staff development, (g) evaluation, (h) personnel, and (i) school improvement. Each of these types of decisions is made at the school level every day. Administrators and teachers should work together to make the best decisions possible for the well-being of all the stakeholders.

Teacher perception played a role in determining teacher participation in decisions. When teachers had the perception that their actions and decisions were not valued, they

felt underappreciated and detached; however, when teachers perceived that they were treated like professionals and were respected by their colleagues and administrators, they were more likely to participate in decisions and to be satisfied with their jobs. In order to encourage teachers to be involved in decision-making, motivation must be considered. People were motivated intrinsically by achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and growth. Individuals were motivated by their needs and a hierarchical framework of human understanding applied to decision-making. People joined certain activities with certain expectations about what they would obtain from the results. This indicated that teachers had expectations about what would happen as a result of their involvement in a decision. The value they expected was a predictor of the outcome.

Years of teaching experience played a role in the evolution of teachers' perceptions. Teachers moved from stabilization in their careers to activism to commitment to serenity to gradual loss of energy and enthusiasm yet a greater sense of self-acceptance. Yet, the question remains as to what decisions teachers are likely to participate in making. There is little research on the determination as to what types of decisions teachers want to participate in making and to the effects that years of experience of teachers may have on the level of participation. The purpose of this study is to determine what types of decisions certified elementary teachers want to participate in making and to determine if years of teaching experience influence the types of decisions in which teachers desire participation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Decisions are made in schools every day, and each one has an impact on someone affiliated with the school. Decision-making is complex, and there are a number of models of educational decision-making including shared, collaborative, group, and consensus models. The types of decisions that are made at the school level range from curriculum to policy to student behavior. The way teachers perceive the effectiveness of decision-making also has an impact on the participation level of teachers in the process. Several researchers (e.g., Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Lynch, 2010; Reeves, 2006; Somech, 2005) have provided information on teacher decision-making. Research has shown that the way teachers perceive their involvement in decision-making has an impact on their motivation and job satisfaction; however, teachers' participation in specific types of school-based decisions and if it relates to years of teaching experience are lesser known.

By providing information on the types of decisions teachers are likely to participate in making and their years of teaching experience, administrators at the elementary level can delegate decisions that have a more positive impact to the teachers. Ultimately, this information can be used by administrators to effectively delegate decisions, to provide better use of collaboration time, and to improve the environment within which teachers work and students learn. The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study was to determine the types of decisions that teachers are likely to participate in making and to determine if a relationship exists between teacher participation in specific types of decisions and years of teaching experience at the elementary level.



## **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following overarching research question: In what types of decisions do certified elementary teachers want to participate? The sub-question that guided the study was:

1. Does a relationship exist between the types of decisions teachers want to participate in making and years of teaching experience at the elementary level?

## **Research Design**

This was a quantitative non-experimental study using an anonymous survey instrument. The quantitative method focuses on controlling a small number of variables to determine relationships and the strengths of those relationships (Mills, 2003). This is the appropriate method for this study because the researcher (a) studied a sample that represented a population, (b) used preconceived concepts and theories to determine the appropriate data that was collected, (c) used statistical methods to analyze the collected data, and (d) prepared objective reports of the research findings (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The purpose of this study was to determine the types of decisions certified elementary teachers were likely to be involved in and to determine if teachers' years of experience had an effect on the decision types.

In this study, there were two variables. The independent variable was the teachers' years of experience. The dependent variable was the types of decisions the teachers were likely to participate in making.

The survey instrument, *Teacher Decision Survey* (see Appendix B), was used to collect data for this study. The survey instrument was created by the researcher based on

the literature. It included nine types of school level decisions. The survey took certified elementary teachers approximately 15 minutes to complete as it consisted of 45 decision items (five individual decisions in each of the nine decision types), two demographic questions, and two open-ended questions, and it was completed by teachers using pencil and paper. Tables 1 through 9 show the nine decision types with the five individual decision items that represented that decision type on the survey.

Table 1

*Survey Items by Decision Type: Instructional Coordination*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
Instructional Coordination	3	The instructional tools you use
	4	Your student rosters for your classes
	9	What standards-based instructional strategies you implement
	12	Which technology tools you have available for your lessons
	31	What field trips your students take each year

Table 2

*Survey Items by Decision Type: Curriculum Development*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
Curriculum Development	7	Your lesson plan template
	8	Which curricular supplemental materials you use
	26	What textbooks you use
	28	What programs you teach from
	45	The standards you can teach to your students

Table 3

*Survey Items by Decision Type: General School Administration*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
General School Administration	5	The number of copies you can make on the copy machine
	14	What will the school budget be used to purchase or support
	30	Where you park your car
	32	The creation of the school calendar
	38	The creation of the duty schedules

Table 4

*Survey Items by Decision Type: Rules and Discipline*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
Rules and Discipline	10	Your classroom rules and procedures
	15	The components in the school-wide discipline plan
	29	The extrinsic rewards students receive for meeting expectations in their behavior
	41	The discipline plan for your students
	44	Consequences for students when sent to the office

Table 5

*Survey Items by Decision Type: Policy Making*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
Policy Making	1	The length of time you are at school each day
	6	Your dress code
	17	What forms to use when referring a student for additional support
	33	How many grades you have to give each grading period
	43	Policies included in the certified handbook

Table 6

*Survey Items by Decision Type: Staff Development*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
Staff Development	2	The activities you do on a professional learning day
	18	The type of staff development you are offered
	36	How often faculty meetings are held
	39	How often you work in a collaborative group
	42	What topics you will learn in professional learning sessions

Table 7

*Survey Items by Decision Type: Evaluation*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
Evaluation	16	The expectations involved in your teacher evaluation
	21	What tests your students will take
	24	The type of feedback you receive from your evaluation
	35	What evaluation tool you will be evaluated by
	37	Your overall evaluation score at your annual evaluation

Table 8

*Survey Items by Decision Type: Personnel*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
Personnel	11	What grade you teach
	13	Who your teammates are
	22	Who your department/grade level chairperson is
	23	The school where you teach
	25	Who your principal is

Table 9

*Survey Items by Decision Type: School Improvement*

Type of Decision	Item Number on Survey	Decision Items
School Improvement	19	Your professional goals
	20	Your students' achievement goals
	27	The academic goals for each subgroup in the school
	34	What student data to collect
	40	The goals included in the School Improvement Plan

This process resulted in a rapid turnaround in data collection of the approximately 320 elementary teachers who participated in the study.

The survey was made available to all certified elementary teachers at 10 elementary schools during faculty meetings. Although all teachers that were present were requested to conduct the survey, participation in the study was voluntary. The surveys were completed at the school site and were distributed and collected by the researcher.

### **Sample and Sampling**

The setting used in this study consisted of 10 elementary schools in one suburban Georgia school district. The school district consisted of approximately 50 schools. The total student enrollment for the school district was about 40,000 students.

The population of the study was a convenience sample of certified elementary teachers. The sample consisted of individuals who had experience with the phenomena under investigation (Creswell, 2009). In this study, the convenience sample was certified teachers from 10 elementary schools in a large Georgia suburban public school district. The 10 schools were selected based on the demographic diversity of their student populations (see Table 10). The schools in the study ranged from the school with the highest socio-economic percentage in the district to the school with the lowest socio-economic percentage in the district. The population involved certified elementary teachers only, and it included various years of teaching experience levels. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), a population size of 322 teachers required a sample size of at least 175 certified elementary teachers in order to meet the requirements for a 95% confidence interval. The response rate for this study was 78.9% ( $n = 254$ ). This sample

size allowed for generalizability of the results to a larger population of elementary teachers. The respondents, schools, and school district remain anonymous in the study. Although these schools are unique, data were analyzed as a whole. Each school's data were not alienated in this study.

Table 10

*Schools Participating in Study Ranked by Percent of Free/Reduced Meals*

School	Number of Certified Elementary Teachers	Percentage of Free/Reduced Meals	Percentage of African American Students	Percentage of Hispanic Students	Percentage of White Students	Percentage of Other Students
<b>A</b>	45	77%	54%	17%	21%	7%
<b>B</b>	44	76%	76%	10%	9%	6%
<b>C</b>	41	72%	65%	8%	20%	7%
<b>D</b>	50	58%	33%	8%	52%	7%
<b>E</b>	38	57%	45%	5%	44%	6%
<b>F</b>	46	56%	54%	7%	32%	6%
<b>G</b>	43	52%	39%	8%	47%	6%
<b>H</b>	51	44%	51%	8%	32%	9%
<b>I</b>	39	31%	41%	9%	44%	6%
<b>J</b>	47	16%	17%	2%	78%	3%

**Instrumentation**

The instrument that was used is the *Teacher Decision Survey* (see Appendix B), which was created by the researcher based on literature. It was pilot tested to determine



that it could be accessed and administered easily and according to plan (Fink, 2006). The pilot testing helped determine if the survey was suitable for its purpose (Fink, 2006). The pilot test was conducted using certified elementary teachers who were not in the actual study and revisions were made based on their input. The survey contained of 45 Likert-type scale decisions that teachers made comparisons in the form of ranks from VL to VU, with VL denoting Very Likely, L denoting Likely, U denoting Unlikely, and VU denoting Very Unlikely, indicating their desired level of likeliness to participate in each decision. The multiple choice format was used as it has been proven to be efficient and reliable. The reliability was enhanced because of the uniform data they provided (Fink, 2006).

Two open-ended questions were included on the survey. They offered insight into additional information about teachers' perceptions of the decisions that they were likely to be involved in making and how their participation had changed throughout their experiences. According to Fink (2006), interpreting open-ended questions can be difficult; however, they were included in this study to add clarity to teachers' responses. The decision items on the survey were ordered so that all items were independent of each other. When creating the survey items, the researcher (a) used Standard English, (b) kept the questions concrete and close to the respondents' experiences, (c) was cautious to avoid words, names, and views that could result in bias, and (d) used a single thought in each decision item.

The decisions listed on the survey represented nine types of school-based decision categories as indicated in the literature (see Appendix C). The researcher created the survey to have representative decisions in each type, which were (a) instructional

coordination, (b) curriculum development, (c) general school administration, (d) rules and discipline, (e) policy making, (f) staff development, (g) evaluation, (h) personnel, and (i) school improvement (Duke et al., 1980).

A weakness was that the survey was not validated by an institution or organization as it was created by the researcher and pilot tested; therefore, no psychometric properties were determined for the survey. Two demographic items were included on the survey. The first identified the respondent as a certified elementary teacher or not. The second demographic question categorized the teacher by a range of years of teaching experience. The range choices were internal rating scales from less than 3 years, 3 to 9 years, 10 to 20 years, 21 to 29 years, and 30 to 30 plus years (Fink, 2006; U. S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, 2007). The demographic questions were placed at the conclusion of the multiple choice portion of the survey as these could be answered quickly (Fink, 2006).

### **Data Collection**

The researcher gained permission to conduct the study through Georgia Southern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix E), the school district's Solicitation of Information Approval, and the 10 principals before attending faculty meetings where surveys were completed by certified elementary teachers.

The data collection procedure was that the researcher visited each of the 10 school sites during faculty meetings. The researcher provided the Cover Letter to Participants explaining the study and the survey instrument for each respondent. The researcher explained the purpose and significance of the study as well as the ethical considerations of keeping individuals and locations confidential. Certified elementary teachers were

asked to volunteer their time to complete the surveys, and completed surveys were collected by the researcher at the end of the meetings.

The cost of the survey was minimal as it was created by the researcher, piloted, and administered using paper and pencil. The advantages of the on-site survey were that the information was obtained immediately and questions about the survey were asked by the respondents as they arose (Fink, 2006). At a few locations, there were teachers who misunderstood the initial directions and asked for additional copies once they received clearer directions. The disadvantages to the on-site survey were that it limited the responses to those currently in attendance at the meetings. At two locations, the administrators only gathered a portion of the faculty together to participate in the survey; however, the ones present willingly participated and the researcher collected more completed surveys than were required for the overall study.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the study was conducted in three parts. During the first part, the researcher surveyed and recorded the data from the respondents. The researcher calculated the percent of respondents that were Very Likely, Likely, Unlikely, and Very Unlikely to participate in each decision. In addition, to calculating the decision items, the researcher analyzed the teacher demographics. In the second part, the researcher calculated the types of decisions and determined if respondents were Very Likely, Likely, Unlikely, or Very Unlikely to participate in each of the nine types of decisions. The third part of the study was to analyze the data based on the demographic information of the years of teaching experience.

After the surveys were collected from the respondents at the 10 schools, the actual response rate was calculated. The researcher assigned each completed survey with a number. This allowed the researcher to verify data entry correctness. The researcher entered the individual data on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and checked it for correctness and completion. Once the data were entered into Excel, it was transferred to the analysis program, Statistical Package for the Social Scientist (SPSS) 19.0, and it was tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze each decision item on the survey. The data were summarized in terms of frequencies, means, and standard deviations. It included a range of scores for each item on the survey. After the descriptive statistical data were tabulated for the individual decision items, an analysis of variance was conducted for each decision type: (a) instructional coordination, (b) curriculum development, (c) general school administration, (d) rules and discipline, (e) policy making, (f) staff development, (g) evaluation, (h) personnel, and (i) school improvement (Duke et al., 1980). After the ANOVA was conducted for each decision type, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength of the dependent variable (willingness to participate in certain decisions) and the independent variable (teachers' years of experience). The results were presented in tables and a narrative format.

The analysis was conducted on each survey item and the nine types of decisions. A numerical value was assigned to each response with Very Likely (VL) being interpreted as 4, Likely (L) being interpreted as 3, Unlikely (U) being interpreted as 2, and Very Unlikely (VU) being interpreted as 1 (Mills, 2003).

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are used to establish relationships between two sets of continuous data (decision types and years of teaching experience) (Fink, 2006). When high values on one variable occur simultaneously with high values on another, the two variables are said to be positively correlated, and when high values on one variable occur with low values on another, the two variables are said to be negatively correlated. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is symbolized as  $r$  and is usually reported in two decimal places (Gall et al., 2007; Salkind, 2005). Correlations can be used to identify relationships between variables; however, they cannot be used to establish causation (Fink, 2006).

Teacher demographics were analyzed which included the position of the person completing the survey and the years of teaching experience. The researcher examined the relationship between teacher demographics and how teachers rated their level of involvement in participating in each decision item and each decision type.

There were two open-ended questions included on the survey. The responses were divided into themes and quantified by years of teaching experience to determine if there was a preponderance of responses within any given theme from any particular experience group. The themes from the first open-ended question were (a) the teacher will continue as a decision-maker, (b) the teacher's experience had an impact on the teacher's willingness to participate in decisions, (c) the teacher had no voice in decision-making, (d) the teacher identified others as decision-makers, (e) the teacher had no time to be involved in decision-making, (f) the teacher had gained confidence through experience, and (g) the teacher did not feel valued as a professional. The themes from the second open-ended question were *items not included in the survey* and *items that were*

*included in the survey.* The *items that were not included in the survey* theme included a variety of additional items that could have been added such as decision-making procedures, support, substitute teachers, cafeteria procedures, report cards, and planning times.

### **Reporting the Data**

The data were reported in tables to rank each decision item as well as tables were used to report each decision type. Tables were used to demonstrate if a relationship existed between the types of decisions teachers were likely to participate in making and the ranges of years of teaching experience. Each table is explained in narrative text.

### **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

The limitations of this study were the result of the fact that the study was based on the data gathered from 10 elementary schools in one Georgia suburban school district. Therefore, the findings may not necessarily be generalizable to other school districts due to differences in size, geographic location, student composition, and faculty composition. Other districts need to consider the demographics when interpreting the results. Limitations of the study also include that the researcher was dependent upon school administrators at each of the schools in the study to determine the best time for the teachers to take the survey. Some of the administrators included the survey as part of regularly scheduled meetings and others called special meetings which included the survey. The inclusion of the survey at meetings may have caused some teachers to feel resentful that their time was being used for non-school related items. Those who conducted the survey during special called meetings may have felt that they had been called to a meeting for the purpose of completing a survey. Also, because in all 10

schools the administrators were present during the survey completion, it was possible that, in spite of the best efforts to remain anonymous, respondents may have modified some of their responses due to fear of repercussions. Another limitation is that this was a quantitative study with no qualitative data and did not allow respondents to explain why they answered as they did. It should be noted that at the time of this study there was a focus on teacher evaluation in the state of Georgia. This may have caused *evaluation* as a decision type to gain more emphasis for teachers in this study than for teachers in another area or at another time. With respect to the survey instrument, *Teacher Decision Survey*, a limitation is that although the instrument was piloted and each item was supported by research, it was not tested for reliability and validity. Therefore, no psychometric properties for this instrument exist.

The delimitations of this study were that the study was being conducted using one level of school structure as the researcher only conducted the study using elementary teachers. Also, because it was not feasible to survey all certified elementary school teachers in suburban Georgia, respondents were chosen from one suburban school district. A delimitation of the survey instrument was that it was conducted using paper and pencil and not through the use of technology. The pencil and paper survey was used as it was cost effective, time efficient, and could easily be validated for accuracy at a later date. This method of taking the survey may have been viewed negatively by some teachers as they may have perceived that the survey required extra time in a faculty meeting.

The assumptions of this study were that the respondents were open and honest in answering the survey instrument. It was assumed that the survey, *Teacher Decision*

*Survey*, measured what was intended. It was assumed that the researcher would have access to the respondents.

### **Chapter Summary**

This was a quantitative non-experimental study using an anonymous survey instrument. This method is appropriate because the researcher used preconceived concepts and theories to determine the appropriate data to be collected, used statistical methods to analyze the collected data, used statistical inference procedures to generalize the findings from the sample to a defined population, and prepared objective reports of the research findings. The purpose of this study was to determine the types of decisions certified elementary teachers were likely to be involved in making and to determine if there was a relationship between teachers' years of experience and the decisions types.

The survey instrument, *Teacher Decision Survey*, was used to collect data for this study. The survey instrument was created by the researcher based on the literature. It included nine types of school level decisions. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete as it consisted of 45 decisions, two demographic questions, and two open-ended questions, and it was completed by teachers using paper and pencil. This process resulted in a rapid turnaround in data collection of the 254 certified elementary teachers who participated in the study.



## CHAPTER 4

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the types of decisions that elementary teachers were likely to participate in making at their schools. Through the use of the *Teacher Decision Survey*, certified elementary teachers ranked a variety of decision items to determine their likeliness to participate in particular decisions. Teachers were identified by their years of teaching experience. An analysis was conducted to determine if a teacher's years of experience had a relationship on the types of decisions he or she was likely to participate in making. The types of decisions are (a) instructional coordination, (b) curriculum development, (c) general school administration, (d) rules and discipline, (e) policy making, (f) staff development, (g) evaluation, (h) personnel, and (i) staff improvement (Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980).

The data were collected from the tabulated results of the survey. Tests were conducted to determine if a statistically significant correlation existed between the types of decisions that teachers were likely to participate in making and years of teaching experience using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test with one dependent variable (type of decision) and one independent variable (years of teaching experience). The Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) 19.0 was used to analyze collected data.

The data used for this study consisted of information gathered from certified teachers from 10 elementary schools in a suburban Georgia school district. The researcher communicated with the principal of each school and asked permission to

attend one faculty meeting to distribute the survey instrument, explain the purpose and significance of the study, and assure the participants that no information would be identifiable from specific individuals or locations. The researcher delivered the surveys during a staff meeting and collected them before the conclusion of the meeting. Data were collected from 322 teachers within the district; however, only 254 were valid due to the employment position of the respondent or lack of survey completion.

Through this study, administrators are able to gain a better understanding of which decisions should be delegated to teachers. The results provide a hierarchy of types of decisions that teachers are more likely to participate in making. The results also include an analysis of the teacher groups by years of experience and the types of decisions. Administrators who are aware of the types of decisions that teachers desire to participate in making can build environments of respect, trust, professionalism, and collaboration in their schools.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the overarching research question: In what types of decisions do certified elementary teachers want to participate? The sub-question that guided the study was:

1. Does a relationship exist between the types of decisions teachers want to participate in making and years of teaching experience at the elementary level?

### **Research Design**

This was a quantitative non-experimental study using an anonymous survey instrument. The purpose of this study was to determine the types of decisions certified

elementary teachers were likely to be involved in making and to determine if there was a relationship between teachers' years of experience and the decisions types.

The survey instrument, *Teacher Decision Survey*, was used to collect data for this study. The survey instrument was created by the researcher based on the literature. It included nine types of school level decisions. The survey took approximately 15 minutes for respondents to complete as it consisted of 45 decisions, two demographic questions, and two open-ended questions, and it was completed by teachers using paper and pencil. This process resulted in a rapid turnaround in data collection of 322 respondents.

### **Respondents**

The population of this study consisted of certified elementary teachers from 10 elementary schools in one suburban school district in Georgia. There were 322 total respondents who participated in the study. Of those collected, 254 were completed surveys. Sixty-eight surveys were either incomplete or not completed by a certified elementary teacher. The overall response rate of certified elementary teachers participating in the *Teacher Decision Survey* was 78.9%. The certified teachers ranged in the years of experience. Table 11 represents the years of teaching experience of respondents. As indicated, the majority (42.1%) of the sample had 10 to 20 years of experience followed by 3 to 9 years of experience (30.3%), 21 to 29 years of experience (13%), less than 3 years of experience (9.8%), and 30 to 30 plus years of experience (4.7%).

Table 11

*Years of Teaching Experience*

Teaching Experience	N	%
< 3	25	9.8
3 – 9	77	30.3
10 – 20	107	42.1
21 – 29	33	13
30 – 30+	12	4.7
Total	254	100.0

**Data Collection**

The researcher gained permission to conduct the study through Georgia Southern University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix E), the school district’s Solicitation of Information Approval, and the 10 principals before attending faculty meetings where surveys were completed.

The data collection procedure was that the researcher visited each of the 10 school sites during faculty meetings. The researcher provided the Cover Letter to Participants, the Georgia Southern University’s IRB, and the survey instrument for each respondent. The researcher explained the purpose and significance of the study and task requested as well as the ethical considerations of keeping individuals and locations confidential. Certified elementary teachers were asked to volunteer their time to complete the surveys in the setting, and surveys were collected by the researcher at the end of the meetings.

Teachers were asked to respond to the 45 decisions on the *Teacher Decision Survey* as well as the two demographic questions and two open-ended questions. The 45 decisions were responded to from a four-point Likert-type scale, where VL represented Very Likely, L represented Likely, U represented Unlikely, and VU represented Very Unlikely.

### **Response to Research Questions**

Before analyzing the overarching question and the research question, the individual decision items that were included on the *Teacher Decision Survey* need to be observed (see Table 12). The individual decision item that teachers scored as Very Likely most often, with a mean score of 3.87, was D10 concerning teachers making decisions about their classroom rules and procedures. This decision was followed by: D11 concerning which grade level the teacher teaches (3.81 mean); D23 concerning the location of the school where the teacher works (3.80 mean); D19 concerning the teacher's individual professional goals (3.76 mean); and, D20 concerning the teacher's students' achievement goals (3.71 mean). The eight lowest individual decision items were D30, D43, D40, D27, D38, D22, and D32. The lowest individual decision item was D30 concerning where teachers park their cars (2.38 mean). This decision was preceded by: D43 concerning the policies included in the certified handbook (2.82 mean); D40 concerning the goals included in the School Improvement Plan (3.04 mean); D27 concerning the academic goals for each subgroup in the school (3.06 mean); D38 concerning the creation of the duty schedules (3.08 mean); D22 concerning who the department/grade level chairpersons are (3.08 mean); and D32 concerning the creation of the school calendar (3.09 mean).

Table 12

*Individual Decision Items Ranked by Mean Scores*

Decision Item	Range	Min	Max	Mean
D10 – Your classroom rules and procedures	2	2	4	3.87
D11 – What grade you teach	3	1	4	3.81
D23 – The school where you teach	3	1	4	3.80
D19 – Your professional goals	2	2	4	3.76
D20 – Your students’ achievement goals	2	2	4	3.71
D2 – The activities you do on a professional learning day	3	1	4	3.65
D3 – The instructional tools you use	2	2	4	3.67
D16 – The expectations involved in your teacher evaluation	3	1	4	3.66
D41 – The discipline plan for your students	3	1	4	3.66
D9 – What standards-based instructional strategies you implement	2	2	4	3.63
D37 – Your overall evaluation score at your annual evaluation	2	2	4	3.63
D12 – Which technology tools you have available for your lessons	2	2	4	3.61
D8 – Which curricular supplemental materials you use	2	2	4	3.60
D7 – Your lesson plan template	3	1	4	3.59
D34 – What student data to collect	2	2	4	3.59

(continued)

Table 12

*Individual Decision Items Ranked by Mean Scores  
(continued)*

Decision Item	Range	Min	Max	Mean
D24 – The type of feedback you receive from your evaluation	2	2	4	3.57
D42 – What topics you will learn in professional learning sessions	3	1	4	3.54
D35 – What evaluation tool you will be evaluated by	3	1	4	3.52
D33 – How many grades you have to give each grading period	3	1	4	3.51
D1 – The length of time you are at school each day	3	1	4	3.48
D18 – The type of staff development you are offered	3	1	4	3.48
D28 – What programs you teach from	2	2	4	3.44
D29 – The extrinsic rewards students receive for meeting expectations	3	1	4	3.42
D5 – The number of copies you can make on the copy machine	3	1	4	3.41
D25 – Who your principal is	3	1	4	3.41
D6 – Your dress code	3	1	4	3.33
D31 – What field trips your students take each year	3	1	4	3.33
D36 – How often faculty meetings are held	3	1	4	3.33
D45 – The standards you can teach to your students	3	1	4	3.33
D39 – How often you work in a collaborative group	3	1	4	3.32

(continued)

Table 12

*Individual Decision Items Ranked by Mean Scores  
(continued)*

Decision Item	Range	Min	Max	Mean
D21 – What standardized tests your students will take	3	1	4	3.30
D4 – Your student rosters for your classes	3	1	4	3.25
D26 – What textbooks you use	3	1	4	3.24
D14 – What will the school budget be used to purchase or support	3	1	4	3.22
D13 – Who your teammates are	3	1	4	3.20
D44 – Consequences for students when sent to the office	3	1	4	3.18
D17 – What forms to use when referring a student for additional support	3	1	4	3.11
D32 – The creation of the school calendar	3	1	4	3.09
D22 – Who your department/grade level chairperson is	3	1	4	3.08
D38 – The creation of the duty schedules	3	1	4	3.08
D27 – The academic goals for each subgroup in the school	3	1	4	3.06
D40 – The goals included in the School Improvement Plan	3	1	4	3.04
D43 – Policies included in the certified handbook	3	1	4	2.82
D30 – Where you park your car	3	1	4	2.38



Another important fact to point out about the individual decision items is that there were eleven individual decisions that no respondent selected Very Unlikely as an answer. Those individual decision items were as follows: D3, instructional tools teachers use; D8, curricular supplemental materials teachers use; D9, standards-based instructional strategies teachers implement; D10, classroom rules and procedures; D12, technology tools teachers have available for their lessons; D19, a teacher's professional goals; D20, the teacher's students' achievement goals; D24, the type of feedback the teacher receives from an evaluation; D28, the programs a teacher teaches from; D34, the student data a teacher needed to collect; and D37, the teacher's overall evaluation score at an annual evaluation. This indicated that participation in these 11 decision items was somewhat likely by all respondents in the survey as they all scored these items as Unlikely, Likely, or Very Likely.

**Overarching research question.** Teachers were asked to respond to the 45 individual decision items on the *Teacher Decision Survey* by selecting one response from the four-point Likert-like scale, where VL represented Very Likely, L represented Likely, U represented Unlikely, and VU represented Very Unlikely. Each decision item corresponded to one of nine decision types: instructional coordination, curriculum development, general school administration, rules and discipline, policy making, staff development, evaluation, personnel, and staff improvement.

The overall decision type that certified elementary teachers wanted to participate in was *evaluation*. The decision types ranked in by their sum of the means scores in the following order: evaluation (17.68); instructional coordination (17.49); rules and discipline (17.36); staff development (17.32); personnel (17.30); curriculum development

(17.20); school improvement (17.16); policy making (16.25); and general school administration (15.18) (see Table 13). The possible range for the sum of the means scores was 5 to 20. The data indicated that teachers were likely to participate in decisions concerning evaluation and instructional coordination, but they were not as likely to participate in decisions concerning policy making and general school administration.

Table 13

*Types of Decisions in Rank Order*

Types of Decisions	Sum of the Means
Evaluation	17.68
Instructional Coordination	17.48
Rules and Discipline	17.36
Staff Development	17.32
Personnel	17.30
Curriculum Development	17.20
School Improvement	17.16
Policy Making	16.26
General School Administration	15.21

**Research subquestion 1.** In an effort to uncover which dependent variable (instructional coordination, curriculum development, general school administration, rules and discipline, policy making, staff development, evaluation, personnel, and staff

improvement) teachers were likely to participate in making, the descriptive statistics of each decision type were calculated to analyze the data statistically.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed among the nine decision types. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. A small positive correlation was found ( $r(252) = .042, p < .001$ ) indicating a significant linear relationship between the years of experience variable and the curriculum development decision type variable. Findings indicated that there exists a positive relationship between the curriculum development decision type and teachers' years of experience (see Table 14). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was .13, which indicated a statistically significant relationship between the two variables demonstrating that the curriculum development decision type and teachers' years of experience were related.

Table 14

*Pearson product-moment correlations between Years of Experience and Decision Types*

	Years	IC	CD	GSA	RD	PM	SD	E	P	SI
Pearson $r$	1	-.05	.13**	.04	.08	.02	.03	-.07	-.06	.06
Sig. (2 tailed)		.440	.042	.486	.232	.723	.600	.282	.331	.337

\*\* $p < .001$  (2-tailed).

When comparing each decision type to each years of teaching experience group using the sum of the means, the range of the possible sum of the means was 5 to 20; however, in this study the range was 15.16 to 17.88 (see Table 15). There was no

statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the instructional coordination decision type; however, teachers with less than 3 years of experience (17.84) did have a slightly higher sum of the means score than the other experience groups, and it was .36 higher than the overall mean. For the curriculum development decision type, there was a statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type as teachers with less than 3 years of experience (16.76) did have a lower sum of the means score than the other experience groups. It was .44 lower than the overall sum of the means while the group of teachers with 21 to 29 years of experience (17.66) had a sum of the means score (.46) higher than the sum of the means score. For the general school administration decision type, there was no statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type; however, teachers with 3 to 9 years of experience (14.91) had a slightly lower sum of the means score than the other experience groups, and it was .30 lower than the overall sum of the means score. For the rules and discipline decision type, there was no statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type; however, teachers with 30 or more years of experience (17.83) had a slightly higher sum of the means score than the other experience groups, and it was .46 higher than the overall sum of the means score. For the policy making decision type, there was no statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type; however, teachers with 3 to 9 years of experience (15.99) had a slightly lower sum of the means score than the other experience groups, and it was .27 lower than the overall sum of the means score. For the staff development decision type, there was no statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type; however,

teachers with less than 3 years of experience (16.96) had a slightly lower sum of the means score than the other experience groups, and it was .36 lower than the overall sum of the means score. For the evaluation decision type, there was no statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type; however, teachers with 30 or more years of experience (17.08) had a slightly lower sum of the means score than the other experience groups, and it was .60 lower than the overall sum of the means score. For the personnel decision type, there was no statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type; however, teachers with 30 or more years of experience (16.75) had a slightly lower sum of the means score than the other experience groups, and it was .55 lower than the overall sum of the means score. For the school improvement decision type, there was no statistical significance between the teachers' years of experience and the decision type; however, teachers with 3 to 9 years of experience and teachers with 30 or more years of experience (16.92) had a slightly lower sum of the means scores than the other experience groups as they were .24 lower than the overall sum of the means score.

Table 15

*Sum of the Means Scores of Variables*

	Variables	Years of Experience Groups					Mean
		A	B	C	D	E	
1	Instructional Coordination	17.84	17.47	17.44	17.39	17.42	17.48
2	Curriculum Development	16.76	17.00	17.24	17.66	17.75	17.20
3	General School Administration	15.16	14.91	15.28	15.63	15.42	15.21
4	Rules and Discipline	17.24	17.12	17.47	17.45	17.83	17.36
5	Policy Making	16.24	15.99	16.52	16.12	16.08	16.26
6	Staff Development	16.96	17.27	17.46	17.27	17.25	17.32
7	Evaluation	17.88	17.81	17.65	17.52	17.08	17.68
8	Personnel	17.40	17.34	17.35	16.88	16.75	17.30
9	School Improvement	17.00	16.92	17.32	17.41	16.92	17.16
Total of Means		152.48	151.83	153.73	153.33	152.50	152.97

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When comparing the sum of the means scores for the years of experience groups, the mean score was 152.97. The experience groups overall, including all decision types, ranked in the following numerical manner: (a) 10 to 20 years of experience (153.73); (b) 21 to 29 years of experience (153.33); (c) 30 to 30 plus years of experience (152.50); (d) less than 3 years of experience (152.48); and (e) 3 to 9 years of experience (151.83) (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Years of Experience Groups Ranked by Sum of the Means Scores*

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Years of Experience	Mean Scores
10 – 20	153.73
21 – 29	153.33
30 – 30+	152.50
< 3	152.48
3 – 9	151.83

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To compare the mean scores of more than two groups, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The one-way ANOVA involved the years of experience variable which had five different grouping levels. The decision type was a continuous variable. The ANOVA compared the variance between the different groups with the variability within each of the groups. An  $F$  ratio was calculated which represented the variance between the groups divided by the variance within the groups. A significant  $F$  test

indicated that there was a relationship between years of teaching experience and the curriculum development decision type (see Table 17).

Table 17

*One-Way ANOVA: Types of Decisions Compared to Years of Experience*

Variable	F	Sig	Sum of Squares
Instructional Coordination	.288	.885	3.72
Curriculum Development	.967	.426*	18.41
General School Admin	.400	.808	13.62
Rules and Discipline	.507	.703	8.65
Policy Making	.613	.654	14.18
Staff Development	.271	.896	5.58
Evaluation	.326	.860	7.45
Personnel	.568	.686	12.20
School Improvement	.579	.678	10.39

\* $p < .001$



**Open-ended questions.** There were two open-ended questions included on the survey. Of the 254 completed surveys, 191 respondents answered the first question: *Throughout your experience as a teacher has your willingness to participate in decisions at the school level changed? Why?* This question had a 75.1% response rate. The responses were divided into themes by the researcher, and the results were quantified by years of teaching experience to determine if there was a preponderance of responses within any given theme from any particular experience group (see Table 18). The seven themes that emerged from the first open-ended question were: (a) the teacher will continue as a decision-maker; (b) the teacher’s experience impacted participation in decisions; (c) the teacher had no voice in decision-making; (d) the teacher identified others as decision-makers; (e) the teacher had no time to be involved in decision-making; (f) the teacher gained confidence through experience; and (g) the teacher did not feel valued as a professional.

Table 18

*Themes of Open-Ended Question #1*

Themes	Years of Experience Groups				
	A	B	C	D	E
Continue as a Decision-Maker	24%	10%	10%	9%	33%
Experience Makes a Difference	24%	25%	26%	27%	17%
No Time to Make Decisions	4%	9%	8%	3%	0%
More Confident to Make Decisions	4%	6%	4%	3%	0%

Other People Make the Decisions	4%	6%	10%	3%	8%
Have No Voice in Decision-Making	8%	5%	4%	18%	0%
Do Not Feel Valued as a Professional	0%	10%	12%	15%	25%
Did Not Respond	32%	27%	25%	21%	17%

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According to the data, a large percentage of each experience group had changed their willingness to participate in decisions at the school level based on their experiences. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the 30 to 30 plus years of experience group wanted to continue as decision-makers in their schools and 25% of that group did not feel valued as professionals.

For the second open-ended question: *Is there anything else about decision-making that you wish you had been asked? If so, what?*, there was a response rate of 17.2% (n = 44). The themes from the second open-ended question were *items not included in the survey* and *items that were included in the survey*. The items not included in the survey theme (9%) included a variety of additional items that respondents suggested could have been added to the Teacher Decision Survey including decision-making procedures, support, substitute teachers, cafeteria procedures, standards-based report cards, and planning times. The responses of items already included as survey decision items (8.2%) were forms, scheduling, textbook use, salaries, supplemental materials, and evaluation programs. The majority of the respondents (82.8%) completing the survey did not respond to the second open-ended question.

### Chapter Summary

A quantitative study was conducted with 254 certified elementary teachers to determine the types of decisions they were likely to participate in making at their schools. The types of decisions are categorized as: (a) instructional coordination, (b) curriculum development, (c) general school administration, (d) rules and discipline, (e) policy making, (f) staff development, (g) evaluation, (h) personnel, and (i) school improvement. Through the use of the Teacher Decision Survey, the respondents ranked a variety of decision items to determine their likeliness to participate in particular decisions. The responses to the survey items were tabulated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test and analysis of variance. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 19.0 was used to analyze the collected data. The analysis indicated that teachers were likely to participate in decisions about evaluation and instructional coordination. Teachers were less likely to participate in decisions concerning policy making and general school administration. The analysis further indicated that there is a relationship between the types of decisions teachers are likely to participate in making and years of teaching experience.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Summary**

Decision-making is an important factor in every organization (Hengpiya, 2008; Robbins & Alvy, 2004). As Vroom and Yetton (1973) theorized, school administrators based their decision-making methods on which type of leadership style the administrator employed. Research showed that through collaborative efforts with teachers, shared decision-making existed when teachers had a voice and felt that their opinions and ideas were heard. This also occurred in schools where teachers were valued as professionals as shared decision-making built morale, increased teachers' job satisfaction, and increased student achievement (Anderson, 2002; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Connors, 2000; Donaldson, 2006; Gabriel et al., 2011; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Lopez, 2011; Robbins & Alvy, 2004).

The literature review revealed that in order to build collaboration, student achievement, job satisfaction, and teacher morale, school administrators should

implement shared decision-making processes in their schools (Anderson, 2002; Blase & Kirby, 2000; Connors, 2000; Donaldson, 2006; Gabriel et al., 2011; Keung, 2008; Knight, 2011; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Lindahl, 2006; Lopez, 2011; Mehta et al., 2010; Robbins & Alvy, 2004). Teachers did not want to be bothered with mundane decisions nor did they want to be asked about decisions that had already been made by others as they found this to be a waste of their time (Blase & Kirby, 2000; Connors, 2000; Keung, 2008; Knight, 2011). When teachers believed that their voices were heard and that their time and opinions were valued, then they were likely to participate in the decisions that they deemed important (Gabriel et al., 2011; Knight, 2011; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Maxwell, 1993; Mehta et al, 2010; Murphy, 2010; Pilcher & Lague, 2009; West et al., 2005).

The types of decisions that teachers were likely to participate in were decisions that directly impacted their classrooms (Huysman, 2008; Stumbo & McWalters, 2010; Whitaker, 2003; Zepeda, 2003). The findings of this study supported the literature as the top three decision types that teachers were likely to participate in making were evaluation, instructional coordination, and rules and discipline which are all directly aligned with the classroom.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the types of decisions teachers were likely to participate in making at their schools. Through the use of the *Teacher Decision Survey*, certified elementary teachers rated a variety of decision items to determine whether they were likely to participate in that particular decision or not. Teachers were identified by their years of teaching experience. An analysis was conducted to determine if the teachers' years of experience had a relationship on the

types of decisions they were likely to participate in making. The types of decisions were (a) instructional coordination, (b) curriculum development, (c) general school administration, (d) rules and discipline, (e) policy making, (f) staff development, (g) evaluation, (h) personnel, and (i) school improvement (Duke et al., 1980).

To gather the data for the study, the survey method was utilized. The survey was distributed to 322 elementary teachers, of which 78.9% (n = 254) responded with completed surveys. The *Teacher Decision Survey* consisted of 45 decision items that included the nine types of decisions. It also included two demographic questions and two open-ended questions. Data from the instrument were analyzed with descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) using the Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) 19.0.

### **Discussion of the Research Findings**

Tschannen-Moran and Tschannen-Moran (2011) stated that teachers and school administrators desire for schools to embody more authentic adaptive responses, open communication, and decision-making. Huysman (2008) agreed that most teachers are interested in being actively involved in decision-making processes at the school level. This is seen in the tremendous response rate associated with this study as 78.9% (n = 254) completed surveys were collected. Another indicator that teachers in the study desired to be involved in decision-making was the overall range of the mean scores in the decision types. There was only a 2.41 difference between the sum of the means scores of the highest ranked decision type, *evaluation* (17.68), and the lowest ranked decision type, *general school administration* (15.21).

### **Types of Decisions Certified Elementary Teachers are Likely to Participate**

Regarding the types of decisions that elementary teachers want to participate in making, Somech (2005), Connors (2000), and Duke et al. (1980) listed the decision types that are made at the school level. They are (a) instructional coordination, (b) curriculum development, (c) evaluation, (d) policy making, (e) staff development, (f) rules and discipline, (g) general school administration, (h) personnel, and (i) school improvement. The study revealed that teachers were likely to participate in these decision types in the following order based on their sum of the means scores: (a) evaluation (17.68); (b) instructional coordination (17.48); (c) rules and discipline (17.36); (d) staff development (17.32); (e) personnel (17.30); (f) curriculum development (17.20); (g) school improvement (17.16); (h) policy making (16.26); and (i) general school administration (15.21) as depicted in Table 13. Teachers were likely to be more involved in decisions that were closely aligned to their classrooms than they were to decisions that dealt with the school as a whole. Donaldson (2006) stated that school staffs are content to have someone else handle contentious and mundane organizational work of the school which included decisions about school budgets, central office initiatives, and scheduling. Keung (2008) stated that teachers had greater desire to participate in instructional decisions than in curricular and managerial decisions. Teachers expressed more desire for participation in decisions that related to classroom instruction than to participate in school level administrative and management decisions.

### **Relationship between the Types of Decisions and Years of Experience**

Regarding a relationship between the types of decisions teachers are likely to participate in making and years of experience, Lynch's (2010) study showed that teachers with 20 or more years of teaching experience were more involved in making decisions

about school goals and strategic plans. According to He and Cooper (2011) and Corbell et al. (2010), beginning teachers were concerned with administrative support in their decision-making where disciplinary procedures, classroom management, and parent involvement were concerned. This study did find a relationship between teachers' years of experience and the types of decisions teachers were likely to participate in making. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicated that a relationship does exist as there was a small positive correlation found ( $r(252) = .042, p < .001$ ) indicating a significant linear relationship between the years of teaching experience variable and the curriculum development decision-making type variable. For other decision types, no significance was found in this study.

### **Open-Ended Questions**

Although the research question has been answered, there was more information to be gained from this study as it related to the open-ended questions on the survey. Each question provided interesting insights in the area of teacher decision-making. The data from the open-ended questions regarding how decisions have changed over time indicated several factors that influence why teachers' likeliness to participate has changed.

#### **Changes in your willingness to participate in decisions at the school level.**

The response rate for this question was 75.1% ( $n = 191$ ). The themes that emerged were: (a) the teacher will continue as a decision-maker; (b) the teacher's experience impacted participation in decisions; (c) the teacher had no voice in decision-making; (d) the teacher identified others as decision-makers; (e) the teacher had no time to be involved in



decision-making; (f) the teacher gained confidence to make decisions; and (g) the teacher did not feel valued as a professional.

The experience groups that scored the highest percentages on the theme of *the teacher will continue as a decision-maker* were the ones at the two extremes, less than 3 years of teaching experience (24% of that group) and 30 to 30 plus years of teaching experience (33% of that group). The less than 3 years of teaching experience group indicated that they had been willing to participate. One stated, “I enjoy being involved in the decisions that affect my workplace, students, and me. I think a way for us as educators to make a difference is to get involved.” The 30 to 30 plus years of teaching experience stated they had always been involved in decision-making. One teacher wrote, “No, I have always been included in decisions at the school level. I have enjoyed this voice and being included in the decisions at the school level.” It should be noted that these experience groups were the smallest in the study as less than 3 years of teaching experience only made up 9.8% (n = 25) of the respondents and 30 to 30 plus years of teaching experience only made up 4.7% (n = 12) of the respondents; however, the literature noted that in Lynch’s (2010) study 77% of beginning teachers agreed that they were involved in decision-making and 88% of teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience agreed they were involved in the decision-making processes at their schools.

The theme of *the teachers’ experiences impacted decision-making* was seen highest in the 21 to 29 years of teaching experience as 29% of this group made comments concerning this theme. This group had a total of 33 respondents in the study. The comments in this area included, “With more experience, I have stronger feelings about

many things. A beginning teacher cannot know all of this,” and “Yes, the older I get, the more I’m willing to voice my opinion.” The literature supported this theme, because it stated that as teachers have experiences throughout their careers those experiences can impact the decisions they make whether they have a positive or negative influence. Keung (2008) stated that participation in decision-making was seen as motivational to the participants, as it released their energy, responsibility, and initiative which resulted in greater commitment to the job and increased job satisfaction. The reverse was also impactful as Maxwell (1993) stated that employees should be involved in decision-making, because employees resisted change when they heard about it from another source. Therefore, experience does impact decision-making.

The theme of *the teacher had no voice in decision-making* was commented on most by the 3 to 9 years of teaching experience group (9% of that group) more than the other groups. This group was 30.3% (n = 77) of the respondents. The comments in this theme included, “Yes, less willing due to feeling a lack of being heard,” and “Yes, teachers don’t seem to have a voice anymore!” The literature supported that teachers believed they do not have a voice in many areas of their profession. Teachers desired to know that administrators and other authorities were paying attention to the factors that motivated and increased their morale, and that somebody had the concern to listen to them and value their ideas (Fowler, 2000; Senate Teacher Morale Study Committee Summary of Findings, 2000; West et al., 2005). According to Knight (2011), when teachers had a voice they felt they could express their ideas and opinions. DuFour et al. (2008) stated that often educators were detached from the results of their teachings because they had little voice in the decisions leading to those results. They teach a

curriculum that has been developed by someone else, use textbooks and materials selected by someone else, adhere to a pace and sequence determined by someone else, and use assessment instruments chosen by someone else.

The theme of *the teacher identified others as the decision-maker* was viewed highest in the 10 to 20 years of teaching experience group (10% of that group). This group consisted of 42.1% (n = 107) of the respondents in the study. The comments in this theme included, “My willingness has not necessarily changed, but the opportunities to do so have. Decisions are made for us (on all levels)!”, “Yes, because often the principal just does what he/she wants to regardless of input or the decisions come from the county office and are already in place,” and “Yes, creativity has been taken away. Everything seems to be left up to those who are not in the classroom on a daily basis if at all.” According to Dever and Carlston (2009), top-down directives left teachers feeling marginalized and with increased regulation of teachers’ work it had a negative effect on their professional self-image and tended to cause burnout. The study conducted by Reeves (2006) showed that teachers perceived that others made the decisions, but in actuality, teachers were the decision-makers in over 70% of the decisions made at the school level.

The theme of *the teacher had no time to be involved in decision-making* was highest in the 3 to 9 years of teaching experience group (9% of that group) more than the other groups. The comments in this theme included, “Yes, I am not willing to take part in decision-making due to the amount of time needed to be a part of that process,” and “Yes, lack of time or motivation.” Knight (2011) stated that teachers became frustrated when the increased work load was the result of school management tasks and when teachers

perceived that they were trading planning time for administrative tasks. The irony of this theme was that involvement in decision-making increased motivation. As Anderson (2002), Keung (2008), and Lynch (2010) stated in their research, the more teachers were involved in the decision-making process at the school level, the more satisfied teachers were in their jobs.

The theme of *the teacher has gained confidence to make decisions* was viewed in the 3 to 9 years of teaching experience group (6% of that group). The comments in this theme included, “Yes, I have more confidence to say what I believe is best. New teachers are a little less confident and reserved,” and “Yes, more confident in my knowledge of areas. No choice given to not participate.” Anderson (2002), Gabriel et al. (2011), Krovetz and Arriaza (2006), and Lindahl (2006) stated that when teachers are involved in true decision-making it built leadership that impacted student learning and influenced the climate and culture of the school in a positive way.

The theme of *the teacher did not feel valued as a professional* was viewed in the 30 to 30 plus years of teaching experience group (25% of that group) more than the other groups. The comments in this theme included, “Yes, at one time I honestly thought my input would matter. Now, I am under the impression that it does not,” and “Seems like decisions are already in place. I feel useless in the process.” During the 2000 Session of the Georgia General Assembly, the Senate Teacher Morale Study Committee conducted a study of teacher morale and found that most teachers believed they should be treated like professionals. It was interesting that the 30 to 30 plus years of teaching experience group scored so high in this theme because Klassen and Chiu (2010) stated that most teachers with 24 plus years of teaching experience reported declining motivation. They also found

that during the years of 19 to 30, teachers experienced years of serenity in which they appeared to gradually lose energy and enthusiasm for teaching. Also, Fuming and Jiliang (2007) argued that teachers with a longer service length were more dissatisfied with self-fulfillment and collegial service relationships. Teachers became more dissatisfied with every aspect of their work as they grew older.

**Changes to the survey.** The response rate was 17.2% (n = 44). The themes were *items included in the survey* and *items were not included in the survey*. The *items were not included in the survey* theme included a variety of additional items that could have been added to the study: decision-making procedures, support, substitute teachers, cafeteria procedures, standards-based report cards, and planning times. The less than 3 years of teaching experience teachers were interested in more information on schedules and discipline procedures. The 3 to 9 years of teaching experience teachers were interested in more information on the paperwork load, budget, and substitute teacher allocations. The 10 to 20 years of experience teachers were interested in more information on teacher placement, job descriptions, salary, and report cards. The 21 to 29 years of teaching experience teachers were interested in more information on the evaluation system and report cards. The 30 to 30 plus years of teaching experience teachers were interested in more information about the number of meetings they had to attend and classroom materials.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the results of this study, there are several conclusions that can be drawn:

1. Teachers do want to be involved in decisions at the school level. In this study, the sum of the means scores for 7 of the 9 decision types were above 17.0 out

of 20.0. Teachers ranked the top 7 decision types in the following order: evaluation (17.68); instructional coordination (17.48); rules and discipline (17.36); staff development (17.32); personnel (17.30); curriculum development (17.20); and school improvement (17.16).

2. Teachers want to be involved in decision-making. In this study, there was a 78.9% response rate as 254 out of 322 teachers who were asked to volunteer for the survey participation completed the survey.
3. Teachers want to be valued as professionals and feel that their voices are heard and that their opinions matter in decision-making processes. In this study, teachers showed a tendency to continue as decision-makers throughout their careers and to have a voice in the decisions that are made at their schools.
4. Years of teaching experience do have an impact on the decisions that teachers are likely to participate in making; therefore, a teacher's perceptions of decisions may change as a result of experiences throughout their careers. In this study, a relationship was found between years of experience and the curriculum development decision type.
5. In regard to the individual decision items, teachers are not likely to want to participate in decisions concerning where they park their cars. This individual decision item had a mean score of 2.38 out of 4. Even though this item resulted in a low mean score, it did cause a great deal of discussion during the actual survey completion. Respondents at two of the schools caused scenes when they ranked this item as one even stood up from her seat and told the

other respondents to stop parking in her parking place. So, even though this decision item did not rank in the overall Likely or Very Likely categories, it did appear to be a decision that some teachers found of great interest.

6. Teachers are very likely to participate in the following individual decisions items: classroom rules and procedures (3.87 mean score); the grade they teach (3.81 mean score); and the school where they teach (3.80 mean score). These decisions ranked high across all years of teaching experience groups.
7. Even though a relationship was only found between the variables in the area of curriculum development, teachers in various years of teaching experience did have decision types that they were more likely to participate in than others (see Appendix F). In this study, decision types were categorized by the teaching experience group that desired to participate in that decision type. For the instructional coordination decision type, teachers in the less than 3 years of experience group had the highest sum of the means score (17.84). For the curriculum development decision type, teachers in the 30 to 30 plus years group had the highest sum of the means score (17.75). For the general school administration decision type, teachers in the 21 to 29 years group had the highest sum of the means score (15.63). For the rules and discipline decision type, teachers in the 30 to 30 plus group had the highest sum of the means score (17.83). For the policy making decision type, teachers in the 10 to 20 years group had the highest sum of the means score (16.52). For the staff development decision type, teachers in the 10 to 20 years group had the highest sum of the means score (17.46). For the evaluation decision type,

teacher in the less than 3 years group had the highest sum of the means score (17.88). For the personnel decision type, teachers in the less than 3 years group had the highest sum of the means score (17.40). For the school improvement decision type, teachers in the 21 to 29 years groups had the highest sum of the means score (17.41).

8. Teachers are less likely to participate in decisions that they do not believe are important or that do not impact them directly. In this study, the two lowest decision types were policy making (16.26 sum of the means score) and general school administration (15.21 sum of the means score).
9. Teachers perceive that experience does make a difference in their decision-making participation. In this study, a high percentage of teachers in each of the years of experience groups made comments to indicate that they believed experience had an impact on their willingness to participate in decisions at the school level.

### **Implications for Administrators**

The findings in this study serve to further solidify the abundance of research that states that teachers should be involved in decisions at the school level. Administrators must develop collaborative relationships with teachers to build shared decision-making opportunities where there is trust, collegiality, and professionalism at all levels of teaching experience. Administrators are better able to share responsibilities with teachers which should reduce administrators' stress and work load and allow more time for collaboration. Administrators need to develop leadership teams where teachers' voices and opinions can be heard and decisions can be made in collaboration with others.



Administrators can also use this research to delegate the types of decisions that are more likely to interest teachers at varying stages in their teaching careers. Decision types that directly impacted the classroom and teacher performance (evaluation, instructional coordination, rules and discipline, and staff development) were the areas that teachers are likely to participate in most. Decisions that were usually seen as managerial or administrative (school improvement, policy making, and general school administration) were areas that teachers were not as likely to want to participate in making.

### **Recommendations for Administrators**

The current study resulted in data that indicated that there is a relationship between the types of decisions teachers are likely to participate in making and years of teaching experience. This study also resulted in a hierarchy of the types of decisions teachers are likely to be involved in making. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests the following recommendations for practice for administrators:

1. Administrators are encouraged to involve teachers from all years of teaching experience groups in decision-making. While this study showed a relationship in decision types and years of teaching experience, all decision types had sum of means scores at or above 16.0 out of 20.0 except general school administration.
2. Administrators are encouraged to engage teachers in leadership teams, collaborative teams, and collegial committees. By engaging teachers in teams or committees, administrators are providing structured forums for teachers to participate in shared leadership decisions.

3. Administrators should use teachers' time wisely and not waste their time on decisions that they do not want to be involved in making. This will affect job satisfaction and teacher morale.
4. Administrators need to listen to their teachers and truly consider the teachers' opinions in decision-making. Teachers want their voices to be heard.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The current study solicited input from certified elementary teachers on the decision types they were likely to be involved in making. The results from this study suggest additional research is needed to determine if teachers at the secondary level would have the same results; therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated with secondary certified teachers. Also this topic should be worthy of further exploration to determine implications as to why teachers preferred involvement in certain decisions. Findings from such research may assist administrators on how they can implement, change, or enhance decision-making processes at their schools.

### **Dissemination**

The findings from this study were disseminated in a number of ways. This dissertation has been published into a hardbound book, and a copy of it has been placed at the Zach S. Henderson Library on the campus of Georgia Southern University, as well as in the Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development on that same campus. An electronic version has also been made available on the Internet. Finally, the researcher has made plans to publish the results of this research in appropriate scholarly journals.

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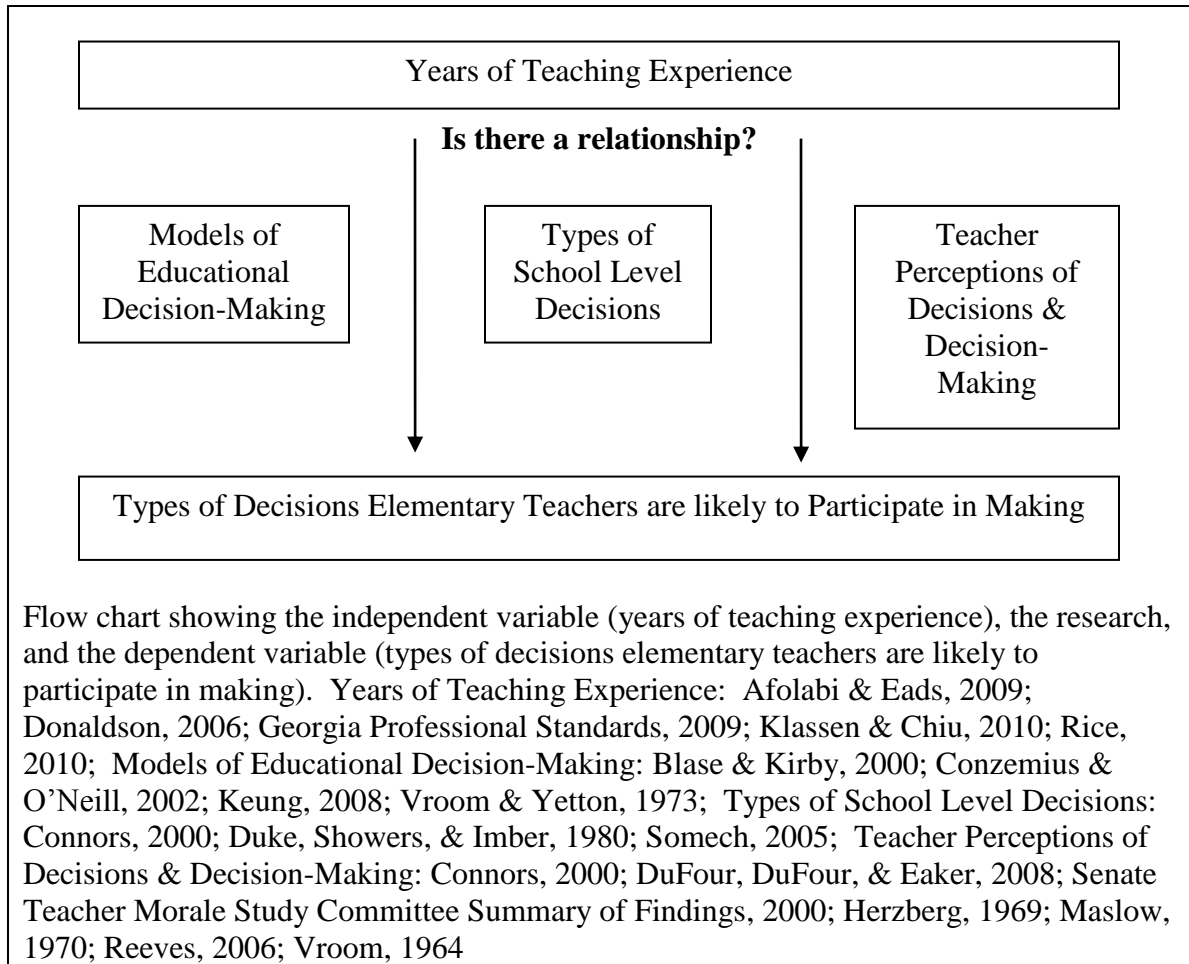
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## APPENDIX A

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF STUDY



## APPENDIX B

### TEACHER DECISION SURVEY®

Instructions: Read each phrase carefully. Circle the letter of the corresponding response of the respective items in the following manner: VL) VERY LIKELY – if your desire is that you are very likely to participate in that decision; L) LIKELY – if your desire is that you are likely to participate in that decision; U) UNLIKELY – if your desire is that you are not likely to participate in that decision; VU) VERY UNLIKELY – if your desire is that you are absolutely not likely to participate in that decision.

Thank you for your time.

<b>To what degree do you desire to participate in each if these decisions?</b>					
		<b>VL = Very Likely</b>	<b>L = Likely</b>	<b>U = Unlikely</b>	<b>VU = Very Unlikely</b>
1.	The length of time you are at school each day	VL	L	U	VU
2.	The activities you do on a professional learning day	VL	L	U	VU
3.	The instructional tools you use	VL	L	U	VU
4.	Your student rosters for your classes	VL	L	U	VU
5.	The number of copies you can make on the copy machine	VL	L	U	VU
6.	Your dress code	VL	L	U	VU
7.	Your lesson plan template	VL	L	U	VU
8.	Which curricular supplemental materials you use	VL	L	U	VU
9.	What standards-based instructional strategies you implement	VL	L	U	VU
10.	Your classroom rules and procedures	VL	L	U	VU
11.	What grade you teach	VL	L	U	VU
12.	Which technology tools you have available for your lessons	VL	L	U	VU
13.	Who your teammates are	VL	L	U	VU
14.	What will the school budget be used to purchase or support	VL	L	U	VU
15.	The components in the school-wide discipline plan	VL	L	U	VU
16.	The expectations involved in your teacher evaluation	VL	L	U	VU
17.	What forms to use when referring a student for additional support	VL	L	U	VU
18.	The type of staff development you are offered, such as job embedded, multiple sessions, interactive, or monthly classes	VL	L	U	VU
19.	Your professional goals	VL	L	U	VU
20.	Your students' achievement goals	VL	L	U	VU
21.	What standardized tests your students will take	VL	L	U	VU
22.	Who your department/grade level chairperson is	VL	L	U	VU
23.	The school where you teach	VL	L	U	VU
24.	The type of feedback you receive from your evaluation	VL	L	U	VU
25.	Who your principal is	VL	L	U	VU
26.	What textbooks you use	VL	L	U	VU
27.	The academic goals for each subgroup in the school	VL	L	U	VU
28.	What programs you teach from	VL	L	U	VU
29.	The extrinsic rewards students receive for meeting expectations	VL	L	U	VU

	in their behavior	
30.	Where you park your car	VL L U VU
31.	What field trips your students take each year	VL L U VU
32.	The creation of the school calendar	VL L U VU
33.	How many grades you have to give each grading period	VL L U VU
34.	What student data to collect	VL L U VU
35.	What evaluation tool you will be evaluated by	VL L U VU
36.	How often faculty meetings are held	VL L U VU
37.	Your overall evaluation score at your annual evaluation	VL L U VU
38.	The creation of the duty schedules	VL L U VU
39.	How often you work in a collaborative group	VL L U VU
40.	The goals included in the School Improvement Plan	VL L U VU
41.	The discipline plan for your students	VL L U VU
42.	What topics you will learn in professional learning sessions	VL L U VU
43.	Policies included in the certified handbook	VL L U VU
44.	Consequences for students when sent to the office	VL L U VU
45.	The standards you can teach to your students	VL L U VU
46.	What is your current position? (Circle A or B.)	A = Certified Elementary Teacher B = Other
47.	What is your number of years of teaching experience? (Circle A, B, C, D, or E.)	A = < 3 years B = 3 – 9 years C = 10 – 20 years D = 21 – 29 years E = 30 – 30+ years

Please answer the following questions:

Throughout your experience as a teacher, has your willingness to participate in decisions at the school level changed? Why?

Is there anything else about decision-making that you wish you had been asked? If so, what?

## APPENDIX C

### ITEM ANALYSIS of Teacher Decision Survey with References

1.	The length of time you are at school each day (Somech, 2005)
2.	The activities you do on a professional learning day (Connors, 2000)
3.	The instructional tools you use (Somech, 2005)
4.	Your student rosters for your classes (Somech, 2005)
5.	The number of copies you can make on the copy machine (Somech, 2005)
6.	Your dress code (Somech, 2005)
7.	Your lesson plan template (Duke et al., 1980)
8.	Which curricular supplemental materials you use (Somech, 2005)
9.	What standards-based instructional strategies you implement (Somech, 2005)
10.	Your classroom rules and procedures (Somech, 2005)
11.	What grade you teach (Duke et al., 1980)
12.	Which technology tools you have available for your lessons (Somech, 2005)
13.	Who your teammates are (Duke et al., 1980)
14.	What will the school budget be used to purchase or support (Connors, 2000)
15.	The components in the school-wide discipline plan (Duke et al., 1980)
16.	The expectations involved in your teacher evaluation (Duke et al., 1980)
17.	What forms to use when referring a student for additional support (Somech, 2005)
18.	The type of staff development you are offered, such as job embedded, multiple sessions, interactive, or monthly classes (Duke et al., 1980)
19.	Your professional goals (Duke et al., 1980)
20.	Your students' achievement goals (Somech, 2005)
21.	What standardized tests your students will take (Somech, 2005)
22.	Who your department/grade level chairperson is (Duke et al., 1980)
23.	The school where you teach (Duke et al., 1980)
24.	The type of feedback you receive from your evaluation (Somech, 2005)
25.	Who your principal is (Duke et al., 1980)
26.	What textbooks you use (Duke et al., 1980)
27.	The academic goals for each subgroup in the school (Somech, 2005)
28.	What programs you teach from (Somech, 2005)
29.	The extrinsic rewards students receive for meeting expectations in their behavior (Somech, 2005)
30.	Where you park your car (Duke et al., 1980)
31.	What field trips your students take each year (Connors, 2000)
32.	The creation of the school calendar (Somech, 2005)
33.	How many grades you have to give each grading period (Duke et al., 1980)
34.	What student data to collect (Somech, 2005)



35.	What evaluation tool you will be evaluated by (Duke et al., 1980)
36.	How often faculty meetings are held (Connors, 2000)
37.	Your overall evaluation score at your annual evaluation (Duke et al., 1980)
38.	The creation of the duty schedules (Somech, 2005)
39.	How often you work in a collaborative group (Duke et al., 1980)
40.	The goals included in the School Improvement Plan (Duke et al., 1980)
41.	The discipline plan for your students (Duke et al., 1980)
42.	What topics you will learn in professional learning sessions (Duke et al., 1980)
43.	Policies included in the certified handbook (Somech, 2005)
44.	Consequences for students when sent to the office (Duke et al., 1980)
45.	The standards you can teach to your students (Somech, 2005)
46.	What is your current position?
47.	What is your number of years of teaching experience?

## APPENDIX D

### SURVEY ITEMS BY DECISION CATEGORY

Instructional Coordination	
3.	The instructional tools you use (Somech, 2005)
4.	Your student rosters for your classes (Somech, 2005)
9.	What standards-based instructional strategies you implement (Somech, 2005)
12.	Which technology tools you have available for your lessons (Somech, 2005)
31.	What field trips your students take each year (Connors, 2000)
Curriculum Development	
7.	Your lesson plan template (Duke et al., 1980)
8.	Which curricular supplemental materials you use (Somech, 2005)
26.	What textbooks you use (Duke et al., 1980)
28.	What programs you teach from (Somech, 2005)
45.	The standards you can teach to your students (Somech, 2005)
General School Administration	
5.	The number of copies you can make on the copy machine (Somech, 2005)
14.	What will the school budget be used to purchase or support (Connors, 2000)
30.	Where you park your car (Duke et al., 1980)
32.	The creation of the school calendar (Somech, 2005)
38.	The creation of the duty schedules (Somech, 2005)
Rules and Discipline	
10.	Your classroom rules and procedures (Somech, 2005)
15.	The components in the school-wide discipline plan (Duke et al., 1980)
29.	The extrinsic rewards students receive for meeting expectations in their behavior (Somech, 2005)
41.	The discipline plan for your students (Duke et al., 1980)
44.	Consequences for students when sent to the office (Duke et al., 1980)
Policy Making	
1.	The length of time you are at school each day (Somech, 2005)
6.	Your dress code (Somech, 2005)
17.	What forms to use when referring a student for additional support (Somech, 2005)
33.	How many grades you have to give each grading period (Duke et al., 1980)
43.	Policies included in the certified handbook (Somech, 2005)
Staff Development	
2.	The activities you do on a professional learning day (Connors, 2000)
18.	The type of staff development you are offered, such as job embedded, multiple sessions, interactive, or monthly classes (Duke et al., 1980)
36.	How often faculty meetings are held (Connors, 2000)
39.	How often you work in a collaborative group (Duke et al., 1980)
42.	What topics you will learn in professional learning sessions (Duke et al., 1980)
Evaluation	
16.	The expectations involved in your teacher evaluation (Duke et al., 1980)
21.	What standardized tests your students will take (Somech, 2005)

24.	The type of feedback you receive from your evaluation (Somech, 2005)
35.	What evaluation tool you will be evaluated by (Duke et al., 1980)
37.	Your overall evaluation score at your annual evaluation (Duke et al., 1980)
Personnel	
11.	What grade you teach (Duke et al., 1980)
13.	Who your teammates are (Duke et al., 1980)
22.	Who your department/grade level chairperson is (Duke et al., 1980)
23.	The school where you teach (Duke et al., 1980)
25.	Who your principal is (Duke et al., 1980)
School Improvement	
19.	Your professional goals (Duke et al., 1980)
20.	Your students' achievement goals (Somech, 2005)
27.	The academic goals for each subgroup in the school (Somech, 2005)
34.	What student data to collect (Somech, 2005)
40.	The goals included in the School Improvement Plan (Duke et al., 1980)

APPENDIX E

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs <b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>		
Phone: 912-478-0843		Veazey Hall 2021 P.O. Box 8005 Statesboro, GA 30460
Fax: 912-478-0719	IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	

**To:** Debra DeAnn Collins  
Dr. Paul Brinson

**cc:** Charles E. Patterson  
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** 11/16/11

**Initial Approval Date:** 11/15/11

**Expiration Date:** 09/30/12

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H12144** and titled "**Elementary Teacher Decisions and Effects of Years of Experience**," it appears that your research involves activities that do not require full approval by the Institutional Review Board according to federal guidelines.

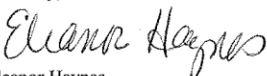
According to the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46, your research protocol is determined to be exempt from full review under the following exemption category(s):

B2 Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (I) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (II) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research is exempt from IRB approval. You may proceed with the proposed research.*

**Please notify the IRB when you have completed the project by emailing [irb@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:irb@georgiasouthern.edu). Include the date of completion, the number of subjects (records) utilized and if there were any unexpected events related to the subjects during the project. (If none, state no unexpected or adverse events occurred during the conduct of the research.)**

Sincerely,

  
Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer

## APPENDIX F

### *Years of Experience Group that Ranked Highest per Decision Type*

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Decision Type	Years of Experience Group that Ranked Highest
Evaluation	Less than 3 years
Instructional Coordination	Less than 3 years
Rules and Discipline	30 to 30 plus years
Staff Development	10 to 20 years
Personnel	Less than 3 years
Curriculum Development	30 to 30 plus years
School Improvement	21 to 29 years
Policy Making	10 to 20 years
General School Administration	21 to 29 years

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