

A STUDY OF POWER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS THROUGH AUGMENTATIVE PRACTICES

A Dissertation

by

Michael Edwin Matheny

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APPROVED BY:



Dr. Kenneth D. Jenkins
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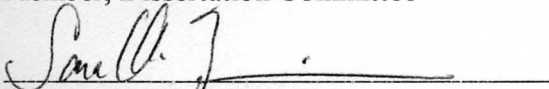
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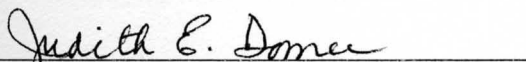
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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF POWER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND
TEACHERS THROUGH AUGMENTATIVE PRACTICES. (December 1997)

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The purpose of this study was to examine whether principals who held transformational leadership beliefs behaved in consonance with those beliefs to transform the power relationships in schools. Further, in this study both principal knowledge and teacher knowledge of the principal's transformational practices were examined and I sought to determine whether each knew if these transformational practices were being employed to change power relationships.

Two distinct data collection procedures were used to address the questions posed in this study. In one procedure, described as the macro-study, quantitative methods were used to determine the frequency with which principals practiced transformational leadership factors. Nine hundred and five North Carolina principals were surveyed concerning descriptions of their leadership practices.

In the second procedure, described as the micro-study, qualitative methods were used to investigate the actual employment of leadership practices at the school level. Twenty principals from the macro-study were randomly selected for on-site interviews.

Ten principals were chosen from the top 10% of the range used to identify the frequency at which transformational concepts were used while the remaining ten were from the bottom 10%. A focus group of teachers from each selected principal's school was interviewed separately for the purpose of comparing teacher perceptions of the principal's leadership practices to those described by the principals themselves.

Forty interviews produced 3,007 quotes or phases used by principals and teachers as they described principal behaviors that affected the control or shift of power between them. The responses of the teachers and principals were compared using a chi-square test. Verbal data were analyzed for content which indicated conditions where principals used transformational practices to change the power relationships between themselves and their teachers.

Data from the macro-study showed that principals claimed to use the language of empowerment and transformational concepts at high frequency. Results of the micro-study showed that principals consistently employed traditional methods of leadership while the employment of transforming leadership was quite variable.

Principals from the micro-study, and their respective teacher focus groups, revealed that principals who were from the high group practiced transformational behaviors at a higher frequency. Principals exhibiting transformational behaviors practiced specific augmenting behaviors with more intensity than principals from the lower group. Principals who strongly adhered to transformational practices communicated more inspiring and motivating ideas and concepts while leading teachers than less transformational principals. When talking to teachers, transformational principals

communicated their philosophies, ideals, and vision for the school more often than their less transformational counterparts.

Analysis of verbal reports showed evidence that principals from both the high and low groups were engaged in empowering teachers through decision-making, program and curriculum development, and the enhancement of professionalism and teacher leadership. There were many instances where principals indicated employing principal control. Teachers with transformational principals and teachers with less transformational principals both confirmed instances of empowering and principal control behaviors. The data revealed further instances where principals used the language of empowerment while manipulating the situation to maintain control and influence decisions.

Principals were found to choose behaviors that could either be empowering, disempowering, or have no effect on the power relationships between themselves and teachers. Verbal data revealed that choices made by all principals were based upon that principal's intent with respect to the desired results. Many of these choices were found to have moral and ethical ramifications for the empowerment or disempowerment of teachers.