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Adult Education Teacher Empowerment and The Likelihood of Education System Reform

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**Adult Education Teacher Empowerment
and
The Likelihood of Education System Reform**

A Research Paper

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the
Department of Occupational and Technical Studies
Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Master of Science Degree

By

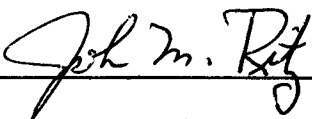
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April 27, 2001

Signature Page

This research paper was prepared by Susan Flowers under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

Approved by: 
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Date: 5-4-01

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the 21st Century, basic adult education and literacy is in a state of reform. In 1993, the United States Congress mandated measurement of America's progress toward National Education Goal 6: By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

One particular project, authorized by the National Institute For Literacy (NIFL), was developed in response to this Congressional mandate. In 1994, NIFL implemented the beginning of systemic reform in adult education with its research project, Equipped for the Future (EFF). During the first four years of this ten-year project, from 1994 to 1998, survey and focus group research was conducted nationwide. Information concerning broad responsibilities, key activities, and specific knowledge and needed skills for successful working adults were gathered from thousands of adult educators and adult learners. Consensus was built on the meaning of roles and key paths towards satisfying fulfillment in a competing, global economy. The adult education program network in the state of Virginia was among the grantees that played a major role in this national research project (Merrifield, 2000).

However, as the year 2000 begins, Virginia's network of adult education programs is no longer considered a player in this national system of reform. Only three sites within Virginia are considered active in implementing the standards developed from Equipped for the Future (EFF). The majority of adult education programs have declined

the opportunity to implement EFF. It is the intent of this research thesis to ascertain reasons why the adult education programs in Virginia failed to participate in the national system of reform that is based on mandates by the U.S. Congress, 1993.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between adult educators who identify themselves as being empowered within their teaching environment and adult educators who are in favor of using the National Institute For Literacy's Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know in the 21st Century.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis will guide this research:

H₁: Highly empowered adult education teachers will more likely be in favor of using the National Institute For Literacy's Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know in the 21st Century than those teachers who are not.

Background and Significance

The National Literacy Act of 1991 established the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The purpose for this initiative was to focus on accountability in adult education with the NIFL monitoring the progress of states and the nation toward achievement of the National Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning Goal: Every American adult was to be

functionally literate by the year 2000. Developing the project Equipped for the Future (EFF) was the NIFL's response to adult education accountability (Stein, 2000).

Beginning in 1993, the initial research in the first year of the ten-year project entailed sending an open letter for program participation to approximately 6000 programs nationwide, including the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. More than 1500 responses were returned from 149 adult literacy programs in 34 states and Puerto Rico. The objective of this activity was to get, in writing, the opinions of adult students as to what National Goal 6 meant to them. Their responses indicated that in preparing adults within their roles as workers, citizens and parents in the United States, four major purposes for adult literacy were desired:

- Access: To gain access to information and orient one's self in the world.
- Voice: To give voice to one's ideas and opinions and to have the confidence that one's voice will be heard and taken into account.
- Independent action: To solve problems and make decisions on one's own, without having to depend on someone else to mediate the world.
- Bridge to the future: To keep on learning in order to keep up with a rapidly changing world.

In 1995, the NIFL announced a program of planning grants for nationwide field sites to discuss the implications of Equipped for the Future's framework of purposes. EFF's pertinent goal in this standards-based adult education reform was to be a customer-driven program built on national consensus on what adults need to know and be able to do in the 21st Century (Stein, 2000). From 1995 to 1998, Virginia's network of adult education programs was involved in several rounds of planning grants sponsored by the NIFL. Three established adult literacy programs in Virginia were designated as EFF field

sites to facilitate the state's participation in the nationwide development of the EFF Content Standards (National LINCS, 1999). These included:

- Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP), Arlington
- The READ Center, Richmond
- New River Community College, Office of Adult Education, Dublin

Outreach from these centers went to regional adult literacy programs in the form of study groups, focus groups, virtual electronic groups, and workshops to engage adult educators and adult learners in discussions on the identification of adult roles and skills needed for the 21st century (Merrifield, 2000). Their responses were integrated into a nationwide compilation entitled *Equipped For the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know and Be Able to Do in the 21st Century* (Stein, 2000).

Although adult educators and adult learners in Virginia played an active role in developing the EFF Content Standards, participation at the statewide level has since halted at the implementation stage. What continues to be most commonly implemented is teaching from workbooks geared to the design of the test for the General Education Diploma. Both workbooks and test format usually come from the same publisher. Skills development for adults in their roles as worker, community member, and family member, like that found in the EFF Content Standards, is not usually a part of this educational curriculum.

What could be impeding the implementation of a system of adult education that was developed in extensive collaboration with Virginia educators and learners?

Implementing any new system of reform in education involves a number of components that include state agencies, school administration, educators, and the learning community.

Since educators work at the level of direct implementation, the participation of the educator is a key link in system reform. In order for educators to buy into the implementation, educators need to feel empowered in their teaching environment (Klecker & Loadman, 1998). Educator empowerment is seen as a cornerstone of education system reform. It has been defined through six dimensions: job status, professional growth, self-efficacy, decision-making, impact, and autonomy in scheduling (Short, 1994).

If there is truth in the assumption that empowered educators may facilitate successful reform, then what can be observed about the empowerment factor for educators working in Virginia's adult education system in the last fiscal year? From July 1, 1999, through June 30, 2000, the employment statistics for adult educators (Thayer, 2000) were as follows:

	Adult Ed. Teachers	Adult Ed. Administrators
Full-time	124	43
Part-time	1239	187
Volunteers	2730	466

These statistics may indicate a problem with educator empowerment if this comes from components such as job security, wage/salary compensation, and compensation for time spent in lesson development compensation. Adult educators may not feel much empowerment in an adult literacy educational system that relies heavily on part-time and voluntary educator and administrative positions. However, this assumption is inconclusive until it is verified through assessing the level of empowerment felt by Virginia adult educators.

Since the success of reforms in educational systems seems to be dependent on the level of empowerment felt by educators as the literature indicates (Klecker & Loadman, 1998), the hindrance in the implementation stage of the NIFL's EFF Content Standards may be due to low empowerment levels felt by Virginia's adult educators. However, proving the rationale that low empowerment levels have hindered system reform would likely present the effects of confounding variables, potentially clouding reasonable findings and conclusions. Therefore, this research study sought to determine the inverse of this argument which is the following: Highly empowered adult education teachers will more likely be in favor of using NIFL's EFF Content Standards. By correlating the level of empowerment felt by adult educators with a measurement of their attitudes towards the use of EFF Content Standards, a projection of the likelihood of EFF Content Standards being implemented in Virginia as a standard of adult education was made.

Limitations

The following limitation were noted in this study:

- This study of program implementation is focused solely at the level of where educators play a role. Certainly, other players within the state of Virginia's system of adult education have roles in program implementation, or the lack thereof, i.e., program administrators and program policy makers. However, the roles of policy and program administrators are delineated from the scope of this study.

- There is the possibility that adult educators, whether volunteer, part-time or full-time, may not be aware of the Equipped For the Future program. This would be a limitation in terms of program implementation.

Assumptions

The following assumption was made in this study:

- Since Virginia educators and learners seemed to play a major role in the development of Equipped for the Future's Content Standards, it was assumed that all adult education programs within the state had equivalent access to the information concerning this project. This may have not been the case. Lack of access may have caused non-participation by individual adult education programs.

Procedures

By mail, seventy-five adult education program administrators were asked to distribute 600 inventories to adult education teachers in Virginia. Each packet included: a cover letter explaining the objectives of the research, a number of copies of the survey instrument, and self-addressed stamped envelope for return mailing of the survey instrument with responses. A follow-up letter was sent after 10 days from the time of the initial mailing. A reminder message was also sent via electronic mail.

Correlation statistical analysis was conducted to see if a significant relationship exists between adult educators with perceptions of high levels of empowerment and adult educators who were most likely to implement EFF.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to assist the reader of this study:

- *National Institute For Literacy (NIFL)* – The institute charged by Congress in 1991 to measure progress toward National Educational Goal 6 – the goal of a fully literate America.
- *The NIFL's Equipped For The Future (EFF)* – The collaborative 10-year project begun in 1993 established to design a nationwide system of education for adults in preparation and development of their roles in the 21st century.
- *The EFF Content Framework and Standards (EFF Content Standards)* – This is a framework of purposes, roles and standards constituting a broad “curriculum framework” for adult learning that states and programs can use to guide their own curriculum development processes to assure that teaching and learning focuses on results that matter (Stein, 2000). Throughout the text of this study, this work is referred to as EFF Content Standards.
- *Teacher empowerment* – Noted as a complex construct, this is described as a construct that ties personal competencies and abilities to environments that provide opportunities for choice and autonomy in demonstrating those competencies (Short, 1994). Six empirically derived set dimensions define the concept of teacher empowerment: involvement in decision-making, teacher impact, teacher status, autonomy, opportunities for professional development, and teacher self-efficacy.
- *School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES)* – A 5-point Likert-type scale measuring teachers' ratings on their overall empowerment in 6 dimensions:

status, professional growth, self-efficacy, decision-making, impact and autonomy in scheduling (Short & Rinehart, 1992b).

- *General Education Diploma (GED)* – This degree, nationally recognized as the accomplishment of high school education requirements, is awarded to adults who successfully complete one form of a standardized 6-part test.

Overview of Chapters

Despite their participation in the nationwide development of adult education standards, the network of adult education programs in Virginia have declined implementing the standards in their own backyard. Chapter I introduces one reason that EFF Content Standards are not being implemented may be related to the level of empowerment felt by educators in the adult education community.

Chapter II, Review of Literature, discusses the challenges and rewards educational systems face when implementing reform. Also discussed is the definition and basis of measurement of teacher empowerment.

Chapter III, Methods and Procedures, details two instruments combined into one inventory whose results will be correlated to determine if a relationship exists between the perceived level of teacher empowerment and the measurement of teacher attitude towards EFF Content Standards. The first instrument is an established scale, the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) (Short & Rinehart, 1992b). The second instrument is a researcher-developed survey measuring the attitudes of teachers towards the use of EFF Content Standards.

Chapter IV, Findings, highlights the responses to the two instruments with the findings from correlation statistical analysis. Chapter V, Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations, provides an overview of the research problem and inquiry, along with concluding remarks and recommendations for further investigation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

System reform in education is notoriously difficult as evidenced in the literature of public school education systemic reform, grades kindergarten through twelve. The critics point to the endless number of models (Fashola & Slavin, 1998), the resistance to reform (Labaree, 2000; Covalleskie, 1994), and the enemies of the system such as overload and fragmentation (Fullan, 2000). In addition, there is the notion that educational reforms are obsolete (Dorn, 2000) since the year 2000 deadline for every American adult to be literate has come and gone with much left to do for adults in the field of adult education literacy.

However, there are hopes for system reform at the adult education level. One venture based on the hope of reforming the system of adult education at the national level is the project, Equipped For the Future (EFF), developed by the National Institute For Literacy (NIFL) (Stein, 2000). It is a program of reform devised to standardize adult education content and illustrate education accountability through performance-based assessment, i.e., student-work portfolios and projects. It is diametric in use to the current state of adult education delivery that utilizes standardized testing in the evaluation of academic skills, (i.e., Test for Adult Basic Education, TABE) and in the assessment for degree-deferment, mainly the General Education Diploma (GED).

In 1993, this ten-year project began as a collaboration of effort among researchers, networks of adult educators, and communities of adult learners. EFF's characteristic of being a collaborative effort meets one of the necessary requirements for

hopes in promoting systemic change in adult education. In order for system reform to occur, the four components of the adult education system must be involved (Alamprese, 1998). These four components are the following:

- The state agency and staff who administer the federal and state adult education monies;
- The local adult education program and staff who deliver services to adult learners;
- The communities in which these services are located and the adult learners from these communities who participate in adult education services; and
- The nonadult education state and local agencies and staff who provide support and other related services to adult learners.

Change must occur across all of the above components if reform in adult education is to be instituted.

Traditionally, in systemic reform of the K through 12 public school systems, the educator component as change agent has been left out of the process. Teachers have been viewed as an inert ingredient rather than catalysts of reform (Urbanski & Erskine, 2000). Despite literature professing the need for collaborative efforts to implement change, teachers have been left out of the development of the top-down mandates coming from policymakers and school administration (Novick, 1996). With incorporating adult education practitioners into the development of the project, these adult educators have a stake in the implementation of EFF. This should facilitate a better buy-in for educators.

Professional Development

In order for systemic change to take place, a number of assumptions must be met (Alamprese, 1998). These assumptions include the following: 1) state and local adult education staff think there is a need for change; 2) they find value in working together to

provide high-quality services to adults; and 3) they see state policy and funding as key lever for effecting change.

For educators, the value of their work and the appropriate compensation for that work are essential elements in implementing change. It is this investment mentality in the system that proffers the educator with resources of time and money (Stout, 1996). Each hour the educator is compensated for planning lessons or professional development is seen as a return on investment rather than an hour of consumed labor. It is in this modality of investment that offers the educator empowerment as a professional with knowledge and expertise. As in other professions, the investment modality beckons the educator to be involved in his or her own professional development and accountability.

Yet, the adult education system in the state of Virginia resembles the consumed-labor model rather than the return-on-investment model. According to the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2000, report given by Dr. Yvonne Thayer, Director of Virginia's Adult Education System, this system is supported by 2730 volunteer teachers, 1239 part-time teachers, and 124 full-time teachers. Four hundred sixty-six volunteer administrators, 187 part-time administrators, and 43 full-time administrators carry out administration of the system.

This system of adult education in Virginia has some weighty goals. According to the April 1999 Draft of the Virginia State Plan for Adult Education and Family Literacy 1999-2004, the strategies and benchmarks for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2000, have been met by the above-mentioned corps of adult education teachers included preparing 25,000 adult learners to reach the stage of testing for the General Education Diploma (GED). During this same period, the National Institute For Literacy was urging adult

educators across the nation to adopt a model of content standard-based system reform, Equipped For the Future Content Standards. Consequently, this state-wide corps of Virginia adult teachers, underemployed or not employed, were asked to do the following:

- 1) be accountable for test prepping a distinctly large number of adult learners who had not succeeded in their first encounter with public education, K – 12, and
- 2) voluntarily implement a system of reform in adult education, Equipped For the Future (EFF).

Implementation of EFF

As previously noted, this same network of educators did collaborate in the development of EFF for five years. Although there are very active pockets of programs implementing EFF in this state, according to Lisa Levinson, Director, National Center for Equipped For the Future, Virginia is no longer considered a field of implementation for this system reform of adult education as of the year 2000.

Yet, EFF is continuing to be implemented across the nation. Fifteen states have incorporated EFF into their state plans for adult education and more are expected to take part (Stein, 2000). These state systems of adult education are not much different from Virginia in terms of full-time and part-time employment and its use of volunteers. In periodicals published by the National Institute For Literacy and the NIFL-sponsored electronic discussion listserv, educators occasionally express the frustrations of instituting systemic reform through a network of educators who are underemployed or non-employed (Garner, 1999; Duncan, 1999; Spacone, 2000; Baldrige, 2000; NCSALL EFF/RI Standards Study Circle Participants, 2000; Stein, 2000). However, EFF Senior Research Associate and National Director, Sondra Stein indicates that implementing EFF

is just one step in the series of steps necessary for a reform process that needs to incorporate restructuring of the employment practices of state adult education systems nationwide (Stein, 2000). This allusion to changing the practice from using part-timers and volunteers to employing full-time adult educators indicates the need for increasing the empowerment of adult educators. Empowering adult educators is an important component in this package of system reform. In order for EFF to be implemented in adult education programs, educators need to feel their empowerment.

Teacher Empowerment

The concept of teacher empowerment arises from leadership and empowerment research conducted in business and industry in the mid-1980's (Short & Johnson, 1994). Six empirically derived set of dimensions help define the construct of teacher empowerment. These six dimensions are as follows:

1. **Involvement in decision-making** - Participation in critical decisions directly affecting teacher's work.
2. **Teacher impact** - The feeling that the teacher is doing something worthwhile, in a competent manner, and receives recognition for accomplishments.
3. **Teacher status** - The sense of esteem ascribed by students, parents, community members, peers, and superiors to the position of teacher. There is recognition in comments, attitudes, and responses to teacher's instruction along with respect given to the teaching profession.
4. **Autonomy** - The teacher's belief can control certain aspects of their work, i.e., scheduling, curriculum, textbooks, instruction planning.
5. **Opportunities for professional development** - The perception their school offer them opportunities to grow and develop professionally, learn continuously, and expand one's own skills through work life of school.
6. **Self-efficacy** - The perception they have skills and ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and can effect change

in student learning. Develops with self-knowledge and belief of personal competence and mastery of skills to effect desired outcomes.

The School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) is a 38-item instrument measuring these six dimensions (Short & Rinehart, 1992b). This instrument was used in a study designed to determine perceived degree of teacher empowerment at the start of statewide initiative (Klecker & Loaman, 1998). It was found that teachers did not consider themselves a part of the reform process. It was then predicted that the restructuring initiative would lead to status quo and failure of the initiative. From this, it is assumed that the perception educators have of their empowerment in teaching may be closely related to their activity in the role of change agent in educational system reform.

Summary

The literature indicates that the empowerment of educators seems to be a key link in the success of implementing a change in an education system. Empowerment is defined through six measurable dimensions: status, professional growth, self-efficacy, decision-making, impact, and autonomy in scheduling. The NIFL's system of reform in adult education, Equipped For the Future, is a program designed to facilitate the empowerment of adult educators. In Virginia's adult education system, 30% of the adult educators are employed part-time and 67% are volunteers. If terms of employment are an indicator of empowerment, this network does not appear very well empowered. The lack of teacher empowerment may be contributing to the hindrance in implementation of EFF. If this assumption is true, then the inverse is true as well. Adult educators who perceive empowerment in their work should be more likely to implement EFF, a system of reform in adult education.

The following chapter, Chapter III, Methods and Procedures, details the research population, instrument design, methods of data collection and method of statistical analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This research study measured the population of adult educators working in the adult education system of the state of Virginia on two variables: the level of teacher empowerment they perceive and the level of attitude they have towards implementing the National Institute For Literacy Equipped For the Future system of adult education. Copies of a Likert-type instrument were distributed to 75 adult education program administrators for further distribution to individual adult education programs in the state of Virginia. Chi-Square analysis was used for determining statistical significance.

Population

The population studied in this research was adult educators working in the state of Virginia's adult education programs. There are 144 adult education programs in the state administered by 75 program managers. Six hundred adult educators were invited to participate in this research. Approximately 4100 adult educators are employed full-time, part-time, and as volunteers. The identity of each participant remains anonymous.

Instrument Design

Two scales were used to evaluate the perceptions and attitudes of adult educators in the state of Virginia. The first scale measures the level of perception of empowerment adult educators feel in their participation in the adult education system. The School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) (Short & Rinehart, 1992b) is a 38-item, Likert-type instrument measuring level of perception of empowerment through six dimensions:

job status, professional growth, self-efficacy, decision-making, impact, and autonomy in scheduling.

Added to the end of this first scale was a 12-item Likert-type scale measuring the attitudes of adult educators towards implementing the National Institute For Literacy's program of adult education system reform, Equipped For the Future. This scale was developed specifically for this research by the study's author, Susan Flowers. Appendix A contains a copy of the survey.

Methods of Data Collection

A packet of materials was sent to each of the 75 adult education program administrators in the state of Virginia. Each packet included: a cover letter explaining the objectives of the research (Appendix B), eight copies of the survey instrument, and self-addressed stamped envelope for return mailing of the survey instrument with responses. A follow-up letter (Appendix C) was sent 10 days after the initial mailing. Reminder messages were sent via electronic mail and telephone (Appendix D).

Statistical Analysis

From the responses, two factors were determined. The first factor is whether adult educators feel empowered or not empowered by their teaching. The second factor is whether adult educators feel in favor or not in favor of using the National Institute For Literacy's Equipped For the Future Content Standards. The statistical significance of the frequency of these two factors was determined through Chi Square Analysis.

Summary

This research study measured the population of adult educators working in the adult education system of the state of Virginia on two variables: the level of teacher empowerment they perceived and the level of attitude they had towards implementing EFF system of adult education. This assessment was conducted in a two-part Likert-type instrument. The surveys were mailed with self-addressed envelopes for responses, followed by postal, electronic mail and telephone prompts.

In the following chapter, Chapter IV, Findings, the research data are presented. Chi-square statistical analysis is used to determine significant correlation between the two factors: teacher empowerment and implementation of EFF Content Standards.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This research focused on determining if there was correlation among adult educators who felt empowered in their teaching and adult educators who were in favor of using the National Institute For Literacy's Equipped for the Future Content Standards: What Adults Need to Know in the 21st Century. The findings of this research are presented in this chapter in the following sections: Findings with subsections Response Rate, Subscales, Results, and Summary.

Response Rate

Six hundred inventories containing 50 questions were distributed to adult educators in Virginia through adult education program administrators. Items 1 through 38 come from School Participant Empowerment Scale (Short and Rinehart, 1992). Items 39 through 50 were developed for this research. With 327 completed inventories returned to the author, the response rate was 54.5%. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Subscales

The inventory contained 8 subscales (Table 1). Six of the subscales measured levels of dimensions in school participant empowerment. Each of the 6 dimensions of teacher empowerment (decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy,

TABLE 1***Subscale Items***

Subscale	Inventory Items
<u>Empowerment Factors</u>	
Decision making	1, 7, 13, 19, 25, 30, 33, 35, 37, 38
Professional Growth	2, 8, 14, 20, 26, 31
Status	3, 9, 15, 21, 27, 34
Self-Efficacy	4, 10, 16, 22, 28, 32
Autonomy	5, 11, 17, 23
Impact	6, 12, 18, 24, 29, 36
<u>EFF Implementation Factors</u>	
Awareness	39, 45, 49, 50
Favorable Usage	40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46
Non-Favorable Usage	47, 48

autonomy, impact) was measured by a subscale. Two of the subscales determined favorable and non-favorable usage that adult educators reported in regards to EFF Content Standards. Each subscale was comprised of a grouped number of inventory items.

Teachers responded to each of the 38 item statements with respect to the extent to which they felt empowered using a 5-point Likert-type response scale with the following

ratings: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5). Teachers responded with the 5-point Likert type response scale to the final 12 item statements with respect to the extent to which they favored using EFF Content Standards in teaching practice.

For each subscale, the mean was calculated by totaling circled responses for items in that subscale. The total was then divided by the number of items in the subscale. The subscale mean indicated the respondent's feelings for each dimension, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

In order to determine respondent's indication of teaching empowerment (Table 2), all six subscale means were averaged to reach an overall averaged mean of response noted as the Total Mean of Empowerment (TME). The means of each of the 6 dimension-subscals were averaged into one score, the Total Mean of Empowerment (TME). If the TME was a score of 3.5 or above (agree or strongly agree), the respondent was considered as reporting empowerment in his/her teaching work. If the respondent's TME score was 3.0 or below, he/she was classified as not empowered.

In order to determine respondent's indication of favorable or non-favorable usage of EFF Content Standards (Table 2), the averaged mean of the subscale of Favorable Usage was compared to the averaged mean of the subscale Non-Favorable Usage. If the score for favorable usage was 3.5 or higher, the respondent was considered to be reporting in favor of using EFF Content Standards. If the score for non-favorable usage exceeded the score for favorable usage, the respondent was considered to be reporting not in favor of using EFF Content Standards.

TABLE 2
Averaged Means of Subscale Items in 5-Point Likert-Type Scale

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

Subscale	Inventory Item Mean (N=327)
<u>Empowerment</u>	
Decision making	3.0
Professional Growth	2.0
Status	3.0
Self-Efficacy	4.0
Autonomy	4.0
Impact	4.0

Findings

The findings in this research study (Table 3) are as follows:

- 1) 73 of 327 respondents were found to be empowered and in favor of using EFF Content Standards.
- 2) 84 of 327 respondents were found to be empowered in teaching and not in favor of using EFF Content Standards.

- 3) 84 of 327 respondents were found to be not empowered and in favor of using EFF Content Standards.
- 4) 86 of 327 respondents were found to be not empowered and not in favor of using EFF Content Standards.

TABLE 3

***Chi Square Factor Analysis:
Adult Educator Empowerment and
The Likelihood of EFF Content Standards Implementation***

	In Favor	Not In Favor
Empowered	73	84
Not Empowered	84	86

N = 327

 $\chi^2 = .27$

Results

157 respondents felt they were empowered, with 73 of those respondents reportedly in favor of using EFF Content Standards. Between the factors of empowerment and favorable use of EFF Content Standard, Chi-square analysis of the data indicated that a calculated χ^2 value was .27.

Summary

With 600 distributed inventories, there was a 54.5% response rate. The inventory contained 9 subscales. Six subscales determined the level of attitude by respondents concerning teacher empowerment. Two of the subscales indicated the attitudes of teachers held, favorably or non-favorably, in using EFF Content Standards. These two factors, teacher empowerment and usage of EFF Content Standards, were analyzed with Chi-Square to determine correlation. The calculated χ^2 was .27. The summary, conclusions, and recommendations about this result are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research conducted in this study is summarized in this chapter and followed with conclusions drawn from the results of data analysis. Recommendations for further study are also presented.

Summary

In 1993, the U.S. Congress mandated that all Americans need to be literate by the year 2000. From this mandate, the National Institute For Literacy developed a project addressing systemic reform in adult education. This ten-year project, *Equipped For the Future*, is being implemented nationwide. Adult education programs in Virginia have been slow to implement this reform. Part-time and volunteer teachers staff many adult education programs. Because the majority of adult education teachers are employed less than full-time, this research project set out to determine if empowerment in their work played a role in adult educators implementing this systemic reform in adult education referred to as *Equipped For the Future Content Standards*.

The hypothesis that highly empowered adult educators will more likely be in favor of using *EFF Content Standards* was researched by using a 5-point Likert style inventory. This instrument was derived from combining the *School Participant Empowerment Scale* (Short and Rinehart, 1992) with 12 questions inquiring about the use of *EFF Content Standards* that were developed by the author. By correlating the level of empowerment felt by adult educators with a measurement of their attitudes towards the

use of EFF Content Standards, a projection of the likelihood of this program being implemented in Virginia was made.

This study only included the role of the adult educator. The roles of the Virginia State Board of Education or the Department of Education were not included in this report. Another limitation in this report may be a lack of knowledge about EFF by adult educators could be interfering with implementation. However, it was assumed that all programs have had access to the information.

Seventy-five adult education program managers were sent packets containing a cover letter, copies of the inventory, and self-addressed stamped envelope in which to return the completed inventories. In total, 600 copies were mailed. The response rate was 54.5%. Chi-square analysis was used to determine if relationship exists between teachers who felt empowered in their teaching and teachers who favor using EFF Content Standards.

Conclusions

This research was guided by the following hypothesis:

H₁: Highly empowered adult education teachers will more likely be in favor of using the

National Institute for Literacy's Equipped for the Future Content Standards:

What Adults Need to Know in the 21st Century than those teachers who are not.

In Chi-Square factor analysis, $\chi^2 = .27$ and does not surpass the critical value of 3.84 at .05 level of significance. The hypothesis that empowered adult education teachers will more likely be in favor of using EFF Content Standards cannot be accepted.

The findings showed that those who felt empowered in their role as adult educator were LESS likely to be in favor of implementing EFF rather than being more likely to be in favor of implementation. This was just the opposite of the hypothesis prediction. However, this result proved to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, the hypothesis cannot be accepted. From this research, adult educator empowerment does not appear to correspond with implementation of systemic education reform.

Recommendations

Despite the statistical insignificance of the findings, the finding that those empowered in their work as adult educators were less likely to implement change is an interesting observation. One would think that empowerment would facilitate change within a system as previous authors have found (Short, 1994; Fashola & Slavin, 1998). Perhaps the distribution method of the inventories interfered with capturing a better picture of change agents taking place in the Virginia adult education system. Improving the collection of data is recommended.

Even though this research lacked statistical significance, this does not mean the work in determining the lack of participation by adult educators in implementing systemic reform should end. Any discourse in better educating an adult educator is valuable because of the improvement in services to the adult learner. More feedback is needed from the educators themselves to understand participation in program reform, or lack thereof. Directly involving the adult educator in development and assessment of program reform are naturally empowering activities. The purpose and design of the

National Institute for Literacy's Equipped For the Future Content Standards constitutes educator empowerment. In observing the success of this program at the national level over the next few years, the relationship between teacher empowerment and participation in adult education systemic reform should become clearer.

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Appendix A

Adult Educator Inventory

My role in adult education is: (circle one) *teacher* *administrator*

I work: (circle one) *full-time* *part-time* *volunteer*

*Please rate the following statements in terms of how well they describe how you feel.
Rate each statement on the scale:*

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) I am given the responsibility to monitor programs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2) I function in a professional environment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) I believe that I have earned respect. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4) I believe that I am helping kids become independent learners. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5) I have control over daily schedules. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6) I believe that I have the ability to get things done. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7) I make decisions about the implementation of new programs in the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8) I am treated as a professional. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9) I believe that I am very effective. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10) I believe that I am empowering students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11) I am able to teach as I choose. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12) I participate in staff development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13) I make decisions about the selection of other teachers for my school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14) I have the opportunity for professional growth. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15) I have the respect of my colleagues. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16) I feel that I am involved in an important program for children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17) I have the freedom to make decisions on what is taught. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18) I believe that I am having an impact. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19) I am involved in school budget decisions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20) I work at a school where students come first. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21) I have the support of my colleagues. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22) I see students learn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23) I make decisions about curriculum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24) I am a decision maker. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25) I am given the opportunity to teach other teachers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26) I am given the opportunity to continue learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27) I have a strong knowledge base in the areas in which I teach. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28) I believe that I have the opportunity to influence others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29) I perceive that I have the opportunity to grow by working daily with students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30) I can determine my own schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31) I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers in my school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32) I perceive that I am making a difference. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33) Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34) I believe that I am good at what I do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35) I can plan my own schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36) I perceive that I have an impact on other teachers and students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37) My advice is solicited by others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38) I have the opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39) I am aware of the National Institute for Literacy's (NIFL) adult education program Equipped For the Future (EFF). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40) My adult education program has the materials and resources to promote the use of Equipped For the Future (EFF). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41) My colleagues and I use the EFF Content Standards for lesson development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42) I have professional development opportunities to learn and share information regarding EFF Content Standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43) I find EFF Content Standards understandable to use. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44) I prefer using EFF Content Standards for developing curriculum. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45) I find EFF Content Standards to be effective in student learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46) I use EFF Content Standards with all my students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47) I am not interested in using EFF Content Standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- 48) I do not use EFF Content Standards because of time constraints. 1 2 3 4 5
- 49) I have never heard of EFF Content Standards. 1 2 3 4 5
- 50) I teach EFF Content Standards to other teachers. 1 2 3 4 5

**Appendix B
Cover Letter**

P. O. Box 843
Wirtz, Virginia 24184
(540) 721 – 4355
sflowers@cablenet-va.com
March 23, 2001

Dear Adult Education Colleagues:

Today you have received an opportunity to play a role in research in adult education. Enclosed is a 50-item questionnaire asking how you feel about your work in the field of adult education. There is a range of questions about working in adult education in which you can express your feelings from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Completion of this survey should take less than 5 minutes. *Please note: Your responses will be strictly anonymous and will not be identified with you or your place of work.*

All adult educators in the state of Virginia are being invited to take part in this research. Adult education is playing a vital role in preparing and assisting adult learners for the transitioning workplace. It is important that adult educators have a chance to express their feelings about working in adult education.

A postage paid envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Please share this survey with as many colleagues as possible. Responses should be mailed back by **April 6**. Results of this research will be available from the above address by the end of April 2001.

Thank you for playing a role in this valuable opportunity for adult educators to express their feelings about their work in adult education.

Sincerely,

Susan Flowers

Appendix C
Follow-up Letter

P. O. Box 843
Wirtz, Virginia 24184
(540) 721 – 4355
sflowers@cablenet-va.com
April 2, 2001

Dear Adult Education Colleague:

Today this letter comes to you as a reminder to complete and return the 50-item questionnaire you received approximately 10 days ago. Completion of this survey should take about 5 minutes. A postage-paid envelope was enclosed with the original mailing. Your responses will be strictly anonymous and will not be identified with you or your place of work.

Won't you please take the time now to be a part of research in the adult education field? If you have any questions, please contact me at the address above and I will gladly answer any questions, problems, or concerns you may have.

Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Susan Flowers

Appendix D
Follow-Up Electronic Mail Message

Hello, Adult Education Colleague:

*This message is coming to you from Susan Flowers. About two weeks ago, I mailed to you
A 50-item questionnaire asking how you feel about your work in the field of adult education.
I hope you will take time now to finish completing this and place it in the mail via the stamped
envelope that came with the questionnaire. I really appreciate the time you have taken to
participate in this research. If you have any questions please share them with me as soon as
possible. Thank you again.*

Susan Flowers