

Teacher Leadership: A Hybrid Model Proposal

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Abstract:- “The term teacher leadership refers to that set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but who also have influence that extends beyond their own classroom to others within their school and elsewhere” (Danielson, 2006, p. 12). This paper will discuss the emergence of teacher leadership. This paper will compare and contrast at least three different models of teacher leadership and then synthesize them into a hybrid model that would contribute significantly to the creation of a positive and effective school climate.

Keywords:- Leadership, Mixed Methods Research, Quantitative, Qualitative. Effective School Leadership.

I. INTRODUCTION

One cannot read Plato’s accounts of the dialogues of Socrates and believe that teacher leadership is a 21st century idea. From his first days in the Lyceum to the last drop of hemlock and his journey to the Elysian Fields, teacher and leader were one (Reeves, 2008). The increasing pressure on principals has changed the paradigm of school leadership. The need for schools to meet the needs of all learners demands new ways of increasing the effectiveness of schooling. Defining leadership is not easy, yet most of us know it when we see it (Sergiovanni, 2007).

“The term teacher leadership refers to that set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but who also have influence that extends beyond their own classroom to others within their school and elsewhere” (Danielson, 2006, p.12). This description of teacher leadership is the operational definition for the discussion of the recent emergence of teacher leadership.

This paper will evaluate, analyze, and synthesize three-teacher leadership models, methods of increasing teacher leadership in schools. This discussion will highlight the components necessary for a comprehensive teacher leadership model. A synthesis of the models will lead to a new hybrid model that could contribute significantly to the creation of a positive and effective school. For this discussion, climate and culture will be synonymous.

The concept of positive and effective school climate is really a discussion about how teacher leadership influences the culture in the school. Begin with the end in mind (Covey, 2003). What does teacher leadership look like, is it the same in all schools? What are the skills that teacher leaders need to have an impact on the school climate and effectiveness? How will teacher leadership, through any model, have a significant impact on a school climate and effectiveness?

II. WHY TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Danielson (2006) found educational leadership, as described in the professional literature, typically referring to administrative leadership at the school site, has become a gigantic task, beyond the capacity of anyone but the most capable, energetic principal. An analysis of the tasks of the principalship gives credence to the philosophy that leadership is not a one-man job. It may be understandable then, from an effectiveness perspective, for the need for leadership to be functions, not a role embodied in a title or person.

Leadership must be the rock that supports the vision and purposeful action in a school. Therefore, a point to consider from a sustainability perspective is the number of years a principal is at any one school. Danielson (2007) found teachers’ tenure in schools is longer than that of administrators. In many settings, administrators remain in their positions for only three to four years, whereas teachers stay far longer. Many teachers do not want the formal roles associated with leadership. Shared leadership provides opportunities for teachers to take informal or even formal leadership functions when the function matches their skill set or stretch goal.

Arguably one of the most significant factors affecting the emergence of teacher leadership is what Danielson (2007) described as the “leadership itch”. Intuitively teachers know that students learn not only through interactions in individual classrooms, but through efforts by the team of teachers working together in the school. So long as teachers are supported by the school division’s central office leadership, more will take on these formal or informal leadership functions.

Effective schools research (Lezotte, 1991) is a central component of teacher leadership discussion. Lezotte (1991) found effective schools had strong instructional leadership, a strong sense of mission, demonstrated effective instructional behaviors, held high expectations for all students, practiced frequent monitoring of student achievement, and operated in a safe and orderly manner. It is generally accepted by principals that the most important factor contributing to student learning is the quality of teaching, supported by other components in the school’s organization such as the curriculum, the programs and policies for students, and the nature of connections with the external community (Danielson, 2006, p.22).

III. SKILLS SETS OF TEACHER LEADERS

Several authors (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Starratt, 2004) have introduced the role of teachers as leaders in affecting change and achieving school improvement. The acquisition of skills and dispositions by teachers, is necessary for growth.

Harrison & Killion (2007) created a list of functions that current and future teachers leaders may perform, some include: (a) resource provider, (b) instructional specialist, (c) curriculum specialist, (d) mentor, (e) data coach and (f) catalyst for change.

When this list is compared with the role description of principal described early in this paper, it is easy to see why only the most dedicated teachers presently pursue leadership functions, not only in their classroom, or school, but also in the system. The terms may be different but other researchers works (Barab, Suire, & Dueber, 2000; Spreitzer, 1995) support the functions identified, as having meaningful impact on student learning through authentic relationships.

Teacher leadership and why it is necessary has been defined is framed in understanding that leadership is functions and not imbedded in a person. The skill set and functions needed for teachers to be effective teacher leaders and positively impact the culture of the school is supported by research. Therefore, the cultural factors in schools that affect the climate for teacher leadership are also germane to this discussion.

IV. FACTORS AFFECTING THE CLIMATE AND EFFECTIVENESS

Teachers perceptions have of their profession, their colleagues, their purpose and practice may be a support or a hindrance in the advancement of teacher leadership. How colleagues view each other within a school, the egalitarian perspective towards teacher colleagues precludes those without a great deal of self efficacy concerning their skills as a teacher, from taking on leadership functions. The support or lack of support by principals for both formal and informal teacher leadership development within classrooms and the school may encourage or discourage teacher leadership development. The traditional move into administration for those identified as teacher leaders may deter or encourage teachers to become involved in leadership functions. Policies such as site-based decision making may have encouraged some who wish to see the teaching and learning happen to get involve (Hoy & Miskel, 2001).

Danielson (2007) described teaching as a flat profession. She went on to qualify that by saying the the number of years of teaching experience has no bearing on the responsibilities for the teacher. The historical reality was that the only way to get more responsibility was to become an administrator, and that is not a role all teacher leaders seek. Teacher's perceptions of their colleagues has kept some from taking on leadership roles, again that egalitarian philosophy.

School culture has some of the greatest influence on all aspects of teaching and learning, especially on the development of teacher leaders. Deal & Peterson (1999) describe the roles school leaders have in shaping school culture. They suggest that as school leaders, including administrators, teachers, staff members, parents and community members, take on these roles, the school culture and climate will truly support student learning and effectiveness. These symbolic roles are: (a) historian, (b) anthropological sleuth, (c) visionary, (d) symbol, (e) potter, (f) poet, (g) actor, and (h) healer. The skill set described by Danielson (2006) can be seen in the actions needed for these roles. Teacher leaders in combination with principals can lead through both formal and informal titles or functions.

Principals have enormous responsibility and as previously mentioned need to involve teachers in leadership in order for their schools to have climates that are effective in promoting student learning. Johnson & Donaldson (2007) found the standards and accountability movement has placed extraordinary demands on school. To meet these demands, principals are appointing increasing numbers of teacher leaders to work with colleagues in such roles as instructional coach, lead teacher, mentor coordinator and data analyst. Fortunately for principals, colleagues and students, there are teachers who are in the second stage of their teaching career (those with more than 10 years experience) may find these opportunities inviting enough to take on this challenging opportunity. Principals need to do a number of things well to ensure these teacher leaders become effective.

Although principals can create a supportive environment for would-be teacher leaders, how do they go about finding them and what do they do when they find them. Ferriter & Wade (2007) found that finding the leadership fit is crucial to ensuring teacher leaders get started on the right foot. They suggested the site leaders following these steps:

- Observe colleagues to identify those with leadership potential
- Find leadership roles that fit the skills of those identified
- Encourage accomplished teachers to take on appropriate responsibilities
- Accompany teachers in the initial stages of leadership, introducing them to key people and guiding them
- Provide encouragement and feedback
- Decrease support as skills and confidence build
- Encourage leaders to continue the cycle as they identify and support new teacher leaders.

Johnson & Donaldson (2007) do add this qualifier: principal's efforts alone will not enable teacher leaders to succeed. What is needed is a systematic professional development program that will contribute significantly to the creation of a positive and effective school climate.

At school sites throughout the world there are professional development opportunities that align with school goals, division goals and state or provincial goals. In states and in provinces there are academic institutes that offer training programs for administrator, teacher leaders and

managers. Three teacher leadership models will be analyzed and discussed for their contributions to teacher leadership education. A hybrid model that takes the best of these models will be presented.

V. TEACHER LEADERSHIP MODELS

The relationship between leadership and student achievement is profound and significant, both in the statistical and in the practical sense of that term. Researchers have created a strong foundation for this relationship, including Goodlad (1984); Schmoker (1999, 2001, 2006); (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004); (Elmore, 2000); (Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006); (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Reeves (2008) proposed that: The focus of teacher leadership development is not “Do teaching and leadership matter?” but rather ‘How can we best expand and extend the most powerful teaching and leadership strategies?’”

The three models of teacher leadership presented will focus on what leadership lessons and opportunities analyzing for similarities and differences. A synthesis of the previously presented models will inform the construction of the hybrid model that may contribute significantly to the creation of a positive and effective school climate.

VI. TEACHER LEADERSHIP MODEL ONE

Schools and school districts across the U.S. face a growing leadership deficit. Accelerating retirements and reportedly shallow pools of applicants for administrative positions are raising alarms about future leadership (Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik, 2004). The response from the state of Maine was the creation of the Maine School Leadership Network (MSLN). The program combines individual coaching, reflection on practice, and a “community of learners” network to support the efforts of principals and teacher leaders to develop effective and sustainable leadership for Maine’s schools (Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik, 2004).

Two criteria must be met in order for principals, teacher leaders and other school level-leaders to be accepted in the program. The participants must have a desire to enhance their leadership, and they work in districts that explicitly support their efforts to do so (Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik, 2004). A two-year commitment is required of all participants. The program is broken into four phases, they are:

- An analysis of their school’s leadership needs and culture
- The identification of challenges they face as leaders
- The creation of specific learning plans to develop new leadership skills and knowledge
- Engagement in cycles of action, reflection, and learning to embed their new skills and knowledge in their practice

Primary supports in this process are a facilitator/coach, who rides circuit to schools; a team of three or four other participants to serve as critical colleagues; and additional participants from the same region who meet regularly (Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik, 2004).

The activities that participants are involved in reflect what leaders do in their schools. These participants are lead learners that foster the learning of others in their school communities. By taking charge of their own learning and the learning of others, the participants build the leadership skill set to work with colleagues back at the school, as they learn. The benefit to the school is the MSLN participants acquire the self-confidence to work with staff including those more reluctant and less reflective practitioners.

As with any training program some participants join with good intentions but realize this is not their thing and struggle with maybe the content, the context that they work in is so different that they scholarly work they do, it takes too much out of them to work in two very separate worlds. Teacher leaders find colleagues and administrators resistant to the notion of teacher leadership. Teacher leaders assuming leadership functions may be hampered by their own hesitancy in asserting leadership (Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik, 2004).

In the MSLN program, there are two strategies employed to assist the teacher leader learners to exist in the two worlds of their program and their schoolwork. The School Analysis Profile and Plan (SAPP) and the Leadership Development Plan (LDP). The SAPP design assists learners in their leadership role at the school in their area of work, and the SAP design assists the learner with their change process on their leadership journey. There is a link between the two plans and the learning community approach (Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik, 2004).

The programs states that the most important lessons participants learn about leadership comes through examination of their efforts at leading. The transition out of their initial cognitive frame is a major step for MSLN learners. Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik (2004) found that as MSLN turns the microscope on leaders’ actions, this model of cognitive transmission of leadership breaks down, and interpersonal and intrapersonal factors come into high relief. Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik (2004) Here we are learning more each day about the relational dimensions of school leadership and their intersection with leaders’ self-awareness, self-confidence, and emotional intelligence.”

The MSLN takes great strides to ensure the program has impact and to that end, it uses three evaluation questions. They ask: (a) What I think I have learned, (b) What my colleagues see me learning, (c) What are my impacts on student learning. With each new group of MSLN learners, the significance of assessing their impact becomes more evident (Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik, 2004).

In summary Donaldson, Bowe, Mackenzie, & Marnik (2004) stated: Our experience so far with MSLN indicates the vast potential of a school-based model of learning that focuses on learning from leadership work itself, is supported by a network of other learners.

VII. TEACHER LEADERSHIP MODEL TWO

A four-phase model for inclusion of leadership learning within the framework of preservice and inservice teacher education programs holds promise for increased participation in site-based leadership and leadership within the larger educational community (Quinn, Haggard, & Ford, 2006). The model describes the four phases as:

- Phase I includes those skills necessary for effective classroom instruction.
- Phase II explores leadership with peers and within professional associations.
- Phase III illuminates the responsibilities for leadership in preparing the next generation of teachers.
- Phase IV addresses leadership issues for affecting change within the profession.

This model is for inclusion of leadership teaching in their teacher education programs. There are a set of skills and experiences that inform this model (Quinn, Haggard, & Ford, 2006). The model has embedded in the design, opportunities to practice new skills. The first phase is intended to provide teachers with new ideas about teaching and learning. The focus is on the students, but how the participant's leadership learning impacts their students learning. The program's phase one goals are specifically itemized as:

- Effectively organize students, time, materials, space and content for instruction.
- Effectively choose strategies and methods that are appropriate for a given group of students and a particular kind of content.
- Effectively, creatively and consistently convey content-specific information at the appropriate student level.
- Effectively interact with students, colleagues, administrators and parents (Quinn, Haggard, & Ford, 2006).

The program's phase two focus is on peer and professional association with the goals stated as experiences that require reflection and planning for a leadership direction. Experiences may include: (a) preparing a content knowledge inventory, (b) developing plans to increase content knowledge in areas of weakness, and (c) preparing leadership questions to ask your mentor. These experiences or activities move the teacher leader towards excellence in instructional practice and what leaders think about when investigating ways to improve instructional practice.

Phase three of the program focus on mentoring new teachers. The program recommends that formal training in mentorship be provided. Mentor teachers find that they improve their own practice as they mentor (Gordon & Maxey, 2000). Mentors may work with novice teachers in the following areas: (a) conducting parent conference, (b) creating professional development plans, and (c) providing guidance in the areas of special education or technology use. These developmental areas are now extending their leadership knowledge and skills to support teachers in a collaborative relationship.

Phase four of the program focusses on changing the profession, through self-actualizing. This phase sees the teacher leader as a scholar-practitioner. There are two major focusses in phase four. First, an empowered professional teacher may share decision-making at the local level. Participative management, e.g. site-based management, is more effective as the participants are more knowledgeable (Ivancevich, Szilagy, & Wallace, 1977). Second, they take on leadership roles in professional associations and within the profession itself through participation in venues such as professional standards and practices councils (Gordon & Maxey, 2000).

In summary, what the four-phase model program is expecting is that: through the participation in the activities and opportunities described in the four phases of this teacher leadership development model, teachers will be more prepared to accept and become teacher leaders.

VIII. TEACHER LEADERSHIP MODEL THREE

Teacher leadership in a Professional Development School (PDS), the Learning / Teaching Collaborative (L/TC) is a professional Development School initiated in 1987 by two classroom teachers, Vivian Troen and Katherine Boles, in Brookline, Massachusetts public elementary school (Boles & Troen, 1994). The goals of the program were: (a) improve the work of teachers, (b) reform pre-service education, and (c) mainstream special needs students more effectively into the regular classroom. The Collaborative has four components to its framework; they are: (a) team teaching, (b) School / University Collaboration, (c) special education inclusion, and (d) alternative professional teaching time (Boles & Troen, 1994).

Boles & Troen (1994) conducted interviews with teachers in the PDS and found new forms of teacher leadership "bubbling up" from the teachers. The PDS claims the following:

- The PDS nurtured teacher leadership.
- The leadership activities were natural outgrowths of professional interests and work in teams.
- The teachers expressed universal satisfaction with the various components of the Collaborative.
- Teaching practices changed significantly.
- Professional relationships improved.
- The teachers reported collegial relationships with their school principals
- The teachers recognized the fragility of the Collaborative.

The program designated five major areas where teacher leadership growth occurred. These were: (a) team teaching and collaboration, (b) preservice teacher education, (c) curriculum development, (d) research, and (e) governance (Boles & Troen, 1994).

In summary, the PDS claims that it is possible to respect the norms of equality known as egalitarianism and still develop forms of leadership among teachers.

The aforementioned models compared: (a) provision of skill sets and disposition acquisition, (b) scholarly learning opportunities, (c) school life applicability, and (d) will the training in leadership contribute to the creation of a positive and effective climate.

IX. WHAT IS NEEDED IS THE NEW MODEL

A new hybrid model should include best components of the aforementioned models (Four-phase model, the MSLN model and the PDS model), and recommendations from educational research.

Danielson (2006) provides different examples of how teacher leadership is happening in different classrooms, schools, and school districts, but therein is part of the problem. Too many models, programs or efforts that do not have much, if any research base to support methodology or results for valid evaluation. Reeves (2008) proposes: Overall, educators reported that they were more likely to be influenced by the professional practices and action research of their peers than they were to be influenced by journal articles or undergraduate or graduate courses. In order to create a program that will be received by teachers, the program should include the building of skills and dispositions using methods teachers find nonthreatening, engaging, supportive, affirming, challenging, and most important, teachers would recognize how it could improve the culture and climate of school for student learning.

In reviewing the models, the following similarities were found:

- A focus on skill set and disposition acquisition
- There was a mix of classroom and practical on site work
- There were scenario-based discussions
- Participants chose to participate and were supported by their schools or school district
- There were degrees of a set curriculum with opportunities for adjustments based on participant needs
- Expert or quasi expert supports were provided
- Experiences were shared with the other program members but very little changed outside their own duties back at their schools

These similarities are more functional and guard the egalitarianism of teachers. They make teachers feel they are participating in an educational journey, but there is no expectation to step outside the teacher's comfort zone.

The similarities and differences between the models highlight how to build teacher leadership for a positive and effective school climate. However, the reality is, you cannot send a changed person into an unchanged environment and expect the environment to change, without the support of colleagues. The Four-phase model provided no formal application of the model because it was purely theoretical. However, it does recommend application of all skills in appropriate settings with colleagues. The PDS program highlighted the change in individual classroom instruction and sharing that went on with other program participants. In the PDS program, there was a lack of application of the skills and dispositions with other non-program colleagues at

the school sites. The MSLN program accomplished the goal of application of learning through the participant's creation of the LDP with a focus on "evidence of impacts on the school" (Donaldson et al., 2004). The MSLN program provided, through the SAPP, opportunities for reflection and colleague feedback on how their practices had changed.

The area of scholarly learning is assessed through evidence of reading and review of applicable research on teacher leadership and the creation of a positive and effective school climate. In the PDS program, under the Alternative professional teaching time framework, participants are provided designated time each week where opportunities to become a researcher. There was no evidence that this scholarly component was mandatory. The Four-phase model, again from a theoretical perspective only, is implied, not directed. In the MSLN program a component of the SAPP lists reading as one of the activities, but it too does not make it mandatory.

The Four-phase model recommends experiences in each of the four phases that if acted on, could be considered as having school life applicability, but no checks or balances to ensure it happens. The leadership activities that participants in the PDS involved themselves in came out of their professional interest. Though the teachers generally gravitated toward other teachers with similar interests when they assumed their leadership roles, their behavior was entrepreneurial and their activities self-determined (Boles et al., 1994). The school life applicability was most evident in the MSLN program. In their efforts at collaborative leadership, for example, participants explore how much they should push an agenda, where delegating ends and empowerment begins, and how their behaviors in meetings shape the responses of others (Donaldson et al., 2004).

With a key component of leadership focus being the creation of positive and effective school climate the vocabulary addressing culture and climate found in Deal & Peterson (1999) provided an evaluative framework. The Four-phase spoke of effective interactions with students, colleagues, administrators and parents in phase one, which is the novice teacher's involvement level. The need for flexibility to challenges, and working with colleagues to share information, discuss issues and solve problems could all be seen to be working with the culture in an effort to increase effectiveness. The PDs reported on collegial relationships, some being stressful and other relationships with principals as generally supportive. However, no other evidence that the teacher leadership training had any impact on the culture within the school. The MSLN model was most demonstrative in this category. Under the description in the program, what my colleagues see me learning, the summative statement truly demonstrates the impact of leadership, "the proof of leadership lies more in the eye of the led than in the eye of the leader" (Donaldson et al., 2004). The true impact of leadership on the climate and effectiveness of schools is not a short term observable. The summary of the paper will return to this statement.

X. CONCLUSION: THE HYBRID MODEL WORKS

The hybrid model will be named “Pathfinders Leadership Academy” an academy that existed for four years in a rural school division in Canada. This model is being discussed because it has evidence of success to having contributed significantly to the creation of a positive and effective school climate. 21 of 24 participants have assumed leadership functions and roles in their respective school divisions. The model was created because of the concerns mentioned in other research, the need for leaders because of aging and retiring population and the need for distributed leadership for effectiveness and positive school climate.

Path finders will be held up for inspection using the same criteria as the other models including: (a) provision of skill sets and disposition acquisition, (b) scholarly learning opportunities, (c) school life applicability, and (d) will the training in leadership contribute to the creation of a positive and effective climate.

Pathfinders had a set curriculum that was research based. The research provided by one of the founder’s participation in the National Staff Development Council’s leadership Academy. The other founder had experience as the Chairman of the North Central Zone’s Teachers Conference. In order to set the curriculum that met the above stated criteria, the founders read the works of Danielson (1996, 2000); Hirsh & Sparks (1997); (Guskey, 2000); (Bolman & Deal, 2001); (DuFour, 1991); (Caldwell, 1997); (Fullan, 2001); (Hargreaves, 2003); (Collins, 2001); (Deal & Peterson, 1999), and these works were used as resources for presentations and assigned reading.

The scholarly learning opportunities as an extension of the readings, were provided through in academy discussion and as always an assignment component where the academy participant worked at the school site with the three staff members who made the nomination, as well as other staff members who chose to join in.

The school life applicability was evident in the assignments that participants presented at quarterly academy meetings. These presentations took on many forms but always included feedback from school sites on how the leader learners were impacting the climate and effectiveness of the school. The feedback was used to guide deeper discussion on leadership dispositions and skills still needing development.

With the initial requirement of staff nomination as part of the application process, school colleagues were made aware of the curriculum and the purposes of the academy. There was a school evaluation component that provided opportunity for colleagues to raise points of celebration or concern. The participant’s final project addressed the reality of teacher leader training and the impact it has on school climate and effectiveness. The project required the school to do a school culture audit using Deal & Peterson’s (2002) *Shaping School Culture Fieldbook*. The audit was then the evidence used to evaluate the effectiveness of the academy for that school.

Because of the overwhelming research that supports the relationship between leadership and positive and effective school climate, more programs that have the components of the Pathfinders Leadership Academy, to support teacher leaders and subsequently schools in the task of educating every student in a positive and effective climate.

Fullan (2001) described one of the most important skills all leaders need, and focus their energies on building relationships, relationships, relationships. Relational leadership runs through the daily life of every school as educators attend to the quality of relationships, insist on commitment to the school’s goals, and examine and improve instruction (Donaldson, 2006).

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