

Editorial: Teacher Leadership in an Unprecedented Time of Change

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This special issue, our first since a hiatus due to the pandemic, draws attention to teacher leadership (TL) in an unprecedented time of change. During recent years, students across the world are experiencing the consequences of racial injustice; war and the rejection of refugees, immigrants, and migrants; and the economic and health repercussions of a global pandemic. These circumstances are beyond children's control; yet, they make all children increasingly vulnerable. Children need teachers who are courageous and who will take action beyond what is expected or typical. Further, teachers often are called on to act as surrogate family members, and thus, are uniquely positioned to help assure that children are cared for and that they flourish. Nevertheless, although many teachers are taking leadership initiative, they continue to be criticized for failing their students while simultaneously facing growing demands to do more in and out of their classrooms. The articles in this special issue examine TL from both theoretical and practical perspectives, introducing unique conceptualizations and models in the context of education policy and professionalization.

The first two articles focus on conceptualizing and defining TL. First, Jana Hunzicker offers a framework and guide for teachers to use to distinguish between an act of TL and an act of teacher professionalism. The second article, by Hansol Woo, Gerald LeTendre, Deborah Schussler and Soo-Yong Byun examines TL as collective action consisting of coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. These two articles provide new insights that both scholars and practitioners may apply in order to identify and delineate acts of TL. The next three articles in the special issue describe distinctive models that illustrate specific TL practices. In the third article, Jill Bradley-Levine shares findings from a case study of a Teacher Development and Evaluation Model (TDEM) that includes teacher leaders as members of a leadership team responsible for evaluating teachers. Next, Fred Hamel describes an Enhanced Planning Model (EPM) for student teaching, which allows for additional time during the school day for student teachers to engage in planning and reflection on their practice. Finally, Richard Sawyer, Jessica Masterson and Robert Mattson exemplify through an intrinsic case study how David, a teacher leader, responded to the pandemic to demonstrate adaptive expertise.

Hunzicker's (2022) framework, the Five Features of Teacher Leadership Framework and Self-Determination Guide (FFTL) defines TL as actions that are "student-centered, action-oriented, beyond one classroom, a positive influence, and collaborative" (p. 2). Hunzicker grounds the FFTL in Self-Determination Theory, which contends that teachers may pursue leadership opportunities as a response to their desire to achieve autonomy, assert or develop competence, and grow in relationship with or commitment to others. In order to test the FFTL, she shared the instrument with 25 teacher leaders who used it to measure/identify their own acts of possible leadership. Following their use of the instrument, these teacher leaders completed a survey designed to measure the face, content, and construct validity of the framework and guide. The findings indicated that the FFTL may facilitate autonomy as teachers use it to describe possible leadership acts and to differentiate between leadership and professionalism. In addition, the FFTL served as a reflective tool that may motivate teachers toward leadership development. Finally, the FFTL may assist teachers to identify the often unnoticed or unnamed dispositions, knowledge, and skills that teachers utilize as they engage in leadership practice.

Woo, LeTendre, Schussler and Byun (2022) begin their article by drawing a clear distinction among the three constructs of teacher collective action. They identify coordination as an agreement among teachers to assent to shared goals, but to pursue those goals individually, while cooperation requires that teachers not only agree on goals, but also pursue them collectively. However, in the context of coordination and cooperation, teachers may not be engaged in the creation of the goals they pursue. On the other hand, collaboration represents a deeper level of teacher engagement and leadership through which teachers work collectively to plan and implement initiatives. The authors then review research demonstrating how collective action is influenced by school structures and policy across several international settings, noting that differences among nations may influence teachers' engagement in collective action. The authors conclude that identifying the ways that teachers participate in collective action within schools, districts, and even national school systems offers a clearer understanding of how such work influences teacher decision-making and well-being. This is particularly important since practices associated with collaboration may lead to higher levels of teacher job satisfaction and retention in the profession.

Bradley-Levine's (2022) study demonstrates how teacher leaders engage in evaluation of their colleagues within a model uniting school-embedded professional development with a focus on continual instructional improvement through rigorous teacher evaluation practices. In particular, Bradley-Levine found that teacher leaders balanced the demands to develop and support their colleagues while evaluating their practice through positive affirmations focused on instructional success and improvement, transparency as they modeled and shared their own instructional practice, and clear communication of formative feedback with an emphasis on short- and long-term growth. Importantly, teacher leaders demonstrated ethical leadership as defined by Starratt (2004). They understood that their role in teacher evaluation to support continual instructional improvement represented a responsibility to stakeholders including the teachers they evaluated, district and school administrators, the students at their schools, and those students' families. In addition, they practiced authenticity in their ability to own their personal and professional assets and flaws, and by inviting their colleagues to share honest responses to the evaluation process. Further, teacher leaders embodied presence through their focused listening and design of personalized reactions to their colleagues. These practices offer insight into the necessity for teacher leaders to develop ways of being and doing that honor their colleagues. Approaching their work with an ethical perspective is especially important for teacher leaders as they mediate the power relationships inherent in their participation in teacher evaluation.

Hamel's (2022) evaluative research shares the findings of a survey study examining perceptions of an Enhanced Planning Model (EPM), which offered extended planning time for student teachers. Results indicated that students who had recently completed student teaching, their mentor teachers (i.e., teacher leaders), and alumni of the teacher education program who were in their first or second year of full-time teaching agreed that the model improved both planning and reflection for candidates as well as producing a less stressful student teaching experience overall. In addition, respondents agreed that the EPM facilitated growth for student teachers. However, when mentor teachers and novice teachers were asked whether the EPM prepared student teachers for their first year of teaching, responses differed. While novice teachers agreed that the model supported their preparation for full-time teaching, mentor teachers expressed concern that decreasing the number of hours that student teachers work in classrooms with students may negatively impact the novice's preparation for the responsibilities of full-time

teaching. Nevertheless, Hamel judged that the EPM is beneficial for two reasons. First, he argues that student teachers benefit from additional time to thoughtfully prepare learning activities, reflect about instruction, and create strategies for growth. Second, he notes that additional time created opportunities for student teachers and mentors to collaborate and co-teach. Hamel suggests that the distinction between novice teacher and mentor teacher perceptions of the value of the EPM points to the need for teacher leaders to participate more fully in redesigning internship experiences for novice teachers. Further, he challenges teacher leaders to create experiences and spaces that alleviate the stress that novices may feel as they enter the profession since increased pressure can lead to burnout and attrition.

Sawyer, Masterson, and Mattson (2022) describe how one teacher leader, David, met criteria for adaptive expertise. First, the pandemic represented a significant and immediate problem to which David responded. Second, as co-director of a school university partnership, alongside his role as a middle school teacher and university instructor/teacher educator, David qualified as a teacher leader with specific expertise. Third, David responded quickly with reasonable solutions to immediate problems. The authors found that in his attempt to address issues related to transitioning both his middle school and university courses online following the stay-at-home order, David's work was influenced by several key factors which allowed for the continued success of the school university partnership. One of these centered on David's utilization of his technology expertise, which allowed him to transition teaching and learning to virtual spaces rapidly. He also exhibited a commitment to a philosophy of authentic learning that helped him focus on creating meaningful and responsive learning opportunities for all of his students. For example, despite that the pre-service teachers (PSTs) taking David's educational technology course had already designed a project-based unit that they had planned to teach to his 6th grade students, he decided to guide the PSTs through a re-design process, focusing on addressing his middle school students' most pressing needs including connecting adolescents to community resources and providing social emotional supports during a highly stressful experience. Further, David was able to successfully navigate the pandemic as a result of existing relationships and support from the school administrators and university partners with whom he worked. David exhibited three related ways of being, including a humane response to his students' most immediate needs, the expertise he utilized to create virtual spaces in which students could express their concerns, and the application of his understanding of the needs of adult learners.

Finally, it is important to describe TL conceptually, as well as to draw attention to the practices of teacher leaders in order to better understand TL in a time of unprecedented change. Moreover, teachers' leadership work must be examined more carefully because teacher education often neglects to prepare teachers for the realities they face in the classroom, including inequitable distribution of resources in schools and communities, the traumas that students bring to their educational experience, and an uneven support for teachers' work from administrators, students' families, community members, legislators, and policy makers. Thus, developing a deeper understanding of TL during one of the most challenging times in recent history will provide direction in building formal structures to cultivate the capacity for pre- and in-service teachers to learn leadership strategies through teacher education and professional development.

References

Starratt, R. J. (2004). *Ethical Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.