

The Role of Teacher Leaders in School Improvement through the Perceptions of Principals and Teachers

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Abstract

These researchers examined the perceptions of fifteen principals and 96 classroom teachers regarding the role of teacher leadership in school improvement. The data revealed significant differences in how principals and teachers perceive teachers' involvement in teacher leadership roles, in ratings of involvement of teachers in leadership roles when compared to the ratings of how involved they would like to be in those same roles, and how principals and teachers perceived the impact of teacher leadership roles on school improvement. Implications for practice are important to principals, teachers, and district level personnel.

Keywords: teacher leadership; school improvement

1. Introduction

Over the past several years, teacher leadership has become an established feature of educational reform. A number of interconnected factors argue for the necessity of teacher leadership in schools (Danielson, 2006). Ghamrawi (2010) postulated, “The culture of teacher leadership entails that teachers engage in professional dialogue with colleagues; share ideas, knowledge, and techniques, participate in collaborative problem-solving around classroom issues, hone provocative lessons in teams, exhibit passionate professionalism and enjoy extensive opportunities for collegial professional dialogue (p.315)”. Teacher leaders help direct the entire school toward higher standards of achievement and recognition of individual responsibility for school reform. Teacher leaders do not wait to be appointed to a formal role before they offer their expertise and influence to others in order to impact the educational experience of all students (Hatch, White, & Faigenbaum, 2005). Teachers continue to undergo significant change as they are expected to exhibit leadership (Anderson, 2004). This change is embraced by some principals while misunderstood by others, thus leading to confusion and a skewed perception as to how the role of teacher leadership corresponds with the overall school organization. In fact, Scribner and Bradley-Levine (2010) argued, “In practice, it behooves leaders interested in cultivating teacher leadership directed toward influencing substantive school transformation to actively recognize leadership practices.... (p.156).” However, this reform movement toward teacher leadership needs to be a collaborative effort between the principal and the teaching staff. Birky, Shelton, and Headley (2006) stated, “Although the importance of teacher leaders is recognized, teacher leaders are seldom effective in their roles without the support and encouragement of their administrator” (p. 89). The concept of teacher leadership and the influence it has on schools is significant, and more information about the nature of the relationship between teacher leaders and the principals and the influences that impact teacher leadership is warranted. Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study was three fold. First, the researchers’ strived to gain a better understanding of perceptions of teacher leadership roles from the point of view of the teacher and principal and any differences that may occur between the two positions. Secondly, the study examined the teachers’ overall interest of stepping into a teacher leadership position and ways they are encouraged or discouraged to take on this challenge. Thirdly, studied was the extent to which principals and teachers believe the teacher leadership roles contribute to the overall school improvement.

1.1 Conceptual Underpinnings

Barth (2001) declared “Schools badly need the leadership of teachers if they are to improve” (p. 84). Furthermore, research in the area of teacher leadership has progressively concentrated on the value that teacher leaders have for students, fellow teachers, and administrators (Birky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006; Danielson, 2006). Thus, the conceptual framework of teacher leadership framed this inquiry.

1.1.1 Teacher leader defined

The concept of *teacher as leader* and *leader as teacher* (Birky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006) has gained new recognition, but with some disagreement as to the definition of a

teacher leader. Patterson and Patterson (2004) defined a teacher leader as “someone who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or an informal capacity” (p. 74), whereas Danielson (2006) referred to it as a “set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere” (p. 12). Andrews and Crowther (2002) simplified the meaning by describing teacher leadership as “the power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults” (p. 154). Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner’s (2000) conception of teacher leadership stated “We believe teachers are leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning; contribute to school improvement; inspire excellence in practice; and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement” (p.28). Although differing slightly in their definitions, all agree that influence from teacher leaders is not strictly contained within the confines of classrooms, but extends out to include all those impacted by innovative leadership skills recognizing ways to improve schools (Andrew & Crowther, 2002; Childs-Bowen, et al., 2000; Danielson, 2006).

1.1.2 Greater Participation

York-Barr and Duke (2004) argued teacher leadership develops greater participation by interested teachers which leads to ownership and commitment to the established school goals. By allowing teacher leaders the power of shared decision making, they become committed to decisions that emerge. Webb, Neumann, and Jones (2004) acknowledged that since teachers provide such a powerful input into the changes and conditions in the classroom “teachers need to see themselves as leaders or having the potential and responsibility for leadership” (p. 254). The positive effect is that teachers’ morale and sense of self-efficacy heighten. As teachers collaborate and develop professional networks with others, they enjoy ownership in their special projects, thus motivating them intrinsically (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

1.1.3 Professionalism

In addition, teacher leadership has been portrayed as a means to move teaching toward a higher level of professionalism (Moller & Pankake, 2006). By taking this step forward toward teacher leadership, teachers feel empowered thus motivating themselves to have improved performance in the classrooms (Muijs & Harris, 2006). Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000) insisted that “Teacher leadership contributions are critical to improving teacher quality and ensuring that education reform efforts work” (p.33). For some teachers this might include stepping out of their comfort zone to take on more responsibilities and agreeing to share successful teaching techniques with their colleagues.

1.1.4 Teacher Collaboration

Consequently, teachers are more likely to stay in those individual schools where a culture of teacher collaboration and leadership exists (Muijs & Harris, 2006). This allows them time to cultivate stronger teams based on trust where initiatives are easier to start because of the strong safety net of supporters already established. As teacher leadership grows within a school system, it allows the system to be more self-monitoring and

self-improving, thus allowing the improvement programs of the school a better chance of surviving changes in formal leadership (Moller & Pankake, 2006).

1.1.5 Power Struggles

Moller and Pankake (2006) declared power struggles can arise in schools when the goals of the principals and the teachers are not aligned. As a result, these researchers went on to detail three ways for which building teacher leadership will reduce power struggles. First, teachers will have more information on which to base decisions and will understand why decisions are made. Second, teacher leaders are usually those teachers who can communicate collective decisions effectively with others both within and outside the school. Finally, teachers who take on leadership roles and are more informed, can move away from their dependence on the principal and assume responsibility for collective decisions rather than blaming unpopular ideas on the principal (p. 34).

1.1.6 Leadership Reciprocity

If principals are to meet the ever expanding demands of leadership in the 21st century, it becomes necessary for them to enlist help from teacher leaders (Moller & Pankake, 2006) and equally important, it is imperative for the principal to encourage and inspire teachers to become leaders. Anderson (2004) discussed the importance of “leadership reciprocity” (p. 106) that occurs when there is a mutual and interactive influence of teacher leadership on principals as well as a reciprocal influence of principal leadership on teachers. It is important for principals to nurture these leadership tendencies in teachers (Moller & Pankake, 2006) because the principal’s role in relation to teacher leadership and school improvement is crucial (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). However, like all of the changing conceptions of teacher leadership, principal leadership has also undergone a change in perspective.

1.1.7 Intentional Principal Behaviors

As Ash and Persall (2000) contended “creating an organizational culture and infrastructure that supports leadership opportunities for everyone requires principals to have an altogether different set of leadership skills than have previously been necessary” (p. 15). This view on leading requires intentional actions on the part of the principals to establish mutual trust and respect, a sense of shared directionality, distributed power, and allowance for individual expression (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Moller & Pankake, 2006). Moreover, Childs-Bowen, Moller, and Scrivner (2000) pointed out the importance of today’s principals having the knowledge and ability to create an atmosphere of trust to allow teachers to expand on their leadership abilities. Therefore, the role of principal is paramount in intentionally creating internal structures and conditions that promote teacher leadership (Youngs & King, 2002).

1.1.8 Parallelism

The principal has the important role of establishing a vision leading toward the common purpose of cultivating a culture ready to handle successful school improvement through the facilitation of teacher leaders (Lambert, 2003). To succeed in this vision, principals and

teachers need to work together, creating a full rich culture of trust and collaboration between the two leadership positions (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). In support of this belief, using research from their study of nine schools, Andrews and Crowther concluded:

In exploring the dynamics of teachers' leadership roles in successful school projects in phase two of the research, it became evident that the relationship in question could not be fully understood or appreciated in isolation from the work of principals. Indeed, in none of our phase two case studies was teacher leadership found to flourish independently of the principal. (pg. 154) Furthermore, Andrews and Crowther (2002) affirmed that this new educational concept, known as parallelism, placed equivalent value on teacher leadership and principal leadership (p. 155).

1.1.9 Support of Principal

As Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) stated, "Although progress has been made in recognizing that the principal's job is about creating a culture in which principals and teachers lead together, our experience is that this perspective is not widespread" (p. 84). Nevertheless, the roles of teacher leaders are seldom effective without the support and encouragement of their administrators (Birky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006). Since teacher leadership plays an important role in school improvement, appropriate principal actions are necessary for encouraging and promoting such leadership (Birky et al.; Katzenmeyer & Moller). Moreover, because teacher leaders are influenced by their principal's actions, it is important for principals to understand what motivates and what discourages teachers to become leaders. Danielson (2006) declared:

The strict bureaucratic hierarchies are not sufficient, nor are other approaches that place teachers in the role of receiver of accepted wisdom. Rather, to bring the best to bear on the challenges of education, the engagement of teacher leaders in the enterprise is an important component of any improvement strategy. (p. 27)

Thus, the framework for teacher leadership represents a movement of skilled administrator leadership teaming with educators who have the desire to remain in the classroom yet extend their expertise and knowledge to others in the profession (Danielson, 2006). So as the research suggests, the importance of principals willing to utilize different leadership skills in order to promote teacher leadership is paramount in creating a school culture that enhances collaboration and collegiality among the school's members. School leaders must foster this leadership in their teachers in order for successful school improvement.

2. Methodology

The population involved in this study consisted of principals and teachers throughout a Midwestern state. A representative sample of principals (n=15) was chosen by first categorizing school districts into three size categories, large, midsized, and small, then randomly choosing five districts within each category. A total of 214 surveys were then sent

out to the classroom teachers working with those 15 principals, with ninety-six surveys (teachers, n=96) being returned, yielding a return rate of 45%.

2.1 Instrumentation

This study utilized an electronic survey for data collection. The researchers' created *Teacher Leadership Roles Survey* (TLRS) was used to measure the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding the concept of teacher leadership and school improvement. A portion of the survey was adapted with permission by Birky et al. (2006), with the rest created by the researchers based on information gleaned from the extensive review of the literature. For the first portion of the survey, principals and teachers used a four point Likert scale to describe teacher involvement in various leadership roles. The teachers had an additional portion on their survey to describe how involved they would like to be in the same leadership roles. The third portion of the survey allowed the participants to rate their beliefs in the importance of teacher leadership roles on overall student achievement. The test-retest correlations for the twenty statements range from a low of $r = .902$ to a high of $r = 1.0$. All correlations in the test-retest were significant at the .01 level (see Table 1). An example of the survey is at the end of this paper.

Table 1: Test-Retest Reliability of Survey Instrument by Question

Question for Part A – Leadership Roles	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Question 1	.903	.01
Question 2	1.0	.01
Question 3	1.0	.01
Question 4	.951	.01
Question 5	.926	.01
Question 6	.951	.01
Question 7	.956	.01
Question 8	1.0	.01
Question 9	.969	.01
Question 10	1.0	.01
Question for Part B – School Improvement	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Question 1	.906	.01
Question 2	.903	.01
Question 3	.934	.01
Question 4	.906	.01
Question 5	.941	.01
Question 6	.914	.01
Question 7	.964	.01
Question 8	.915	.01
Question 9	1.0	.01
Question 10	.917	.01

2.1.2 Data Analysis

The data from the TLRS derived from selected principals and teachers were collected, tabulated, and analyzed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 18.0. To determine if there were significant differences between perceptions of principals and teachers in regard to teacher leadership roles, *t*-tests for independent means were conducted. Mean scores for each of the ten statements was determined by averaging the scores given by principals and also by teachers. For each statement, *t*-tests were calculated to determine if significant differences existed between the ratings given by principals and ratings given by teachers. This allowed the researchers to determine “whether the means of the two samples were significant” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 241). Next, used was a paired *t*-test to determine if there were significant differences between the ratings of teachers’ involvement in teacher leadership roles compared to the ratings of how involved they would like to be. Again mean scores for each of the ten statements were determined by averaging the score given by the teachers in the column for how involved they are and also for how involved they would like to be. The mean scores were then compared for each of the ten statements between the two columns. Again this allowed “whether the means of the two samples were significant” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 241). Data were collected and a mean score was determined for each of the ten statements. The mean scores were then listed from highest to lowest for each category (teacher and principal). Moreover, to determine if there, were significant differences between teachers and principals on the perceived impact of teacher leadership roles on school improvement, *t*-tests for independent means were again conducted. Mean scores for each of the ten statements was determined by averaging the scores given by principals and also by teachers. For each statement, *t*-tests were calculated to determine if significant differences existed between the ratings given by principals and ratings given by teachers. This further determined “whether the means of the two samples were significant” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 241). Statistical significance was determined at the .05 level of confidence.

3. Findings

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate differences between the ratings from principals and teachers when it pertains to teacher involvement in teacher leadership roles. The mean score for principals was 2.8060 (SD = .57087) while the mean score for teachers was 2.1940 (SD = .67183). Assumed for each test were Equal variances. Illustrated in Table 2 is significant difference between the mean score of principals and teachers, $t(18) = 2.195, p = .042$.

Table 2: Comparison of Teachers' Involvement in Teacher Leadership Roles

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Principal	10	2.8060	.57087	.18053	2.195	18	.042
Teacher	10	2.1940	.67183	.21245	2.195	17.543	.042

Further analysis of the mean scores yielded information of interest relating to the perceptions of the role of teacher leadership in each specific area surveyed. A comparison of the mean score of each individual statement, as shown in Table 3, reveals the perceptions of the principals are higher than the perceptions of the teachers in regard to teacher leadership roles within their schools in all areas. The largest difference in the mean scores was in the area of setting promotion and retention policies. The mean scores for the principals fell within the range of often (2.50 to 3.49) whereas the mean scores for the teachers fell within the range of seldom (1.50 to 2.49). There were four areas where the mean scores for both the principals and the teachers fell within the same range: setting standards for student behavior, often; deciding school budgets, seldom; evaluating teacher performance, seldom; selecting new teachers, seldom. Data indicated, when comparing the overall mean scores for principals compared to those of the teachers, the principals perceived teachers Often (3) participating in the stated teacher roles, whereas the teachers perceived themselves as Seldom (2) participating in the roles.

Table 3: Mean Scores for Statements Concerning Participation in Teacher Leadership Roles

Statement	Principal Mean	Teacher Mean	Total Mean
Choosing textbooks and instructional materials	3.73	2.89	3.31
Shaping the curriculum	3.53	2.97	3.25
Setting standards for student behavior	3.40	3.25	3.33
Tracking students into special classes	2.80	2.37	2.59
Designing staff development/in-services	2.80	2.39	2.59
Setting promotion and retention policies	2.73	1.68	2.21
Deciding school budgets	2.27	1.81	2.04
Evaluating teacher performance	2.13	1.58	1.86
Selecting new teachers	2.40	1.64	2.02
Selecting new administrators	2.27	1.36	1.82
Overall Mean Score	2.81	2.19	

The mean score for the teachers' perceived involvement in the leadership role was

2.1940 (SD = .67183), while the mean score for how involved teachers wanted to be in leadership roles was 2.9540 (SD = .40001) as noted in Table 4.

Table 4: Comparison of Actual Teacher Involvement to How Involved They Want to Be Involved

Teacher Involvement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error of Mean
Actual	10	2.1940	.67183	.21245
Wish to be	10	2.9540	.40001	.12649

Note: N=96

In Table 5 the dependent samples *t*-test indicated that there was significant difference, $t(9) = 7.485$, $p < .001$, between the ratings of involvement of teachers in leadership roles when compared to the ratings of how involved they would like to be in those same roles.

Table 5: Differences between Actual Teacher Involvement and How Involved They Wish to Be

Teacher Involvement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Involvement	10	.7600	.32107	.10153	7.485	9	.000

Note: N=96

Further analysis of the mean scores, as recorded in Table 6, showed that teachers in the study did not feel they were as involved in teacher leadership roles as they would like to be. This held true for all of the ten statements, although several of the mean scores fell within the same range. The mean scores for choosing textbooks and instructional materials and shaping the curriculum all fell within the often range (2.50 to 3.49) yet the higher mean in the wish to be involved column suggests the teachers would like to be more involved than they currently are in their school settings.. The greatest difference in the mean scores was for the statement concerning selecting new administrators. The range indicates teachers felt they actually were never a part of this (1.00 to 1.49), but indicated they would often like to be (2.50 to 3.49).

Table 6. Mean Scores for Comparison of Teacher Involvement to Wish to be Involved

Statement	Actual Involvement	Wish to be Involved
	Mean	Mean
Choosing textbooks and instructional materials	2.89	3.45
Shaping the curriculum	2.97	3.45
Setting standards for student behavior	3.25	3.53
Tracking students into special classes	2.37	2.85
Designing staff development/in-services	2.39	3.11
Setting promotion and retention policies	1.68	2.61
Deciding school budgets	1.81	2.61
Evaluating teacher performance	1.58	2.47
Selecting new teachers	1.64	2.80
Selecting new administrators	1.36	2.66

Note: N=96

The mean scores were determined and analyzed for each of the ten statements pertaining to impact of teacher leadership on school improvement. Scores produced information of interest when comparing the two groups. Reported in Table 7 are the mean scores listed from highest to lowest for principals and teachers for their ratings of the impact of the ten major concepts in regard to school improvement. The mean scores for the first eight concepts of importance to school improvement for the principals fell within the range of Strongly Agree (3.50 to 4.00), whereas only the first five concepts listed for the teachers fell within that same range. The final five mean scores of the teachers fell within the range of Somewhat Agree (2.50 to 3.49). Overall, when comparing the mean scores, the principals averaged in the Strongly Agree (3.50 to 4.00) range, whereas the teachers averaged within the Somewhat Agree (2.50 to 3.49) range.

Table 7: Mean Scores for Impact of Teacher Leadership on School Improvement

Statement	Principal Means	Statement	Teacher Means
Collaboration of teachers	4.00	Modeling leadership skills	3.69
Modeling leadership skills	3.93	Collaboration of teachers	3.68
Attending to the learning of the entire school community	3.80	Atmosphere provided in classroom	3.59
Atmosphere provided in classroom	3.73	Stepping outside of traditional roles	3.57
View themselves as leaders	3.73	View themselves as leaders	3.50
Stepping outside of traditional roles	3.71	Attending to the learning of the entire school community	3.40
Networking with other schools and programs	3.71	Clear vision and established goals	3.31
Clear vision and established goals	3.53	Networking with other schools and programs	3.31
Establish and implement expectations and standards	3.47	Establish and implement expectations and standards	3.26
Working with staff to establish a feeling of trust not only in the individual classrooms but in the entire building	3.40	Working with staff to establish a feeling of trust not only in the individual classrooms but in the entire building	3.22
Overall Mean Score	3.70	Overall Mean Score	3.45

Note: N=96 teachers and N=15 Principals

Independent samples *t*-tests indicated there was a significant difference between the overall mean score of the principals and the overall mean score of the teachers on the perceived impact of teacher leadership roles on school improvement. The mean scores for the principals was 3.7010 (SD = .19052, while the mean score for the teachers was 3.4530 (SD = .17563). Equal variances were assumed for each test. The test showed significant difference between the two groups, $t(18) = 3.027, p = .007$, as reported in Table 8.

Table 8: Comparison of Perceived Impact of Teacher Leadership Roles on School Improvement

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Principal	10	3.7010	.19052	.06025	3.027	18	.007
Teacher	10	3.4530	.17563	.05554	3.027	17.882	.007

Note: N=96 teachers and N=15 Principals

4. Discussion

Throughout the survey, the principals' rankings were higher than those of the teachers' rankings regarding teacher leadership roles. Additionally, the data indicated that principals place more importance on the role of teacher leaders and the impact it has on school improvement than the teachers. Other researchers (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Barth, 2001; Danielson, 2006; Durrant & Holden, 2006) have agreed that constructing teacher leadership in schools is vitally important, but equally significant is the idea that in order for teacher leadership to flourish, principals must be prepared to step into a different type of leadership position (Copland, 2001). Data from this investigation indicated the principals felt their leadership position was allowing teachers to be active in leadership roles. Subsequently the responses from the teachers, when compared to responses of principals, showed they did not feel they were as active, nor allowed to be as active in leadership roles in the schools. In order to allow teacher leadership to flourish, principals must establish structures within the school facilitate the enhancement of teacher dialogue and critical conversations as a significant means for developing school goals and visions (Anderson, 2004; Danielson; Moller & Pankake, 2006). Principals are aware that teachers are an essential part of school improvement, and must allow the teachers to assume the role of leader within the school environment to allow for the success of the students. For teacher leadership to be successful, both the principals and the teachers must understand and value the importance of the position, and continually strive to communicate to enhance both the role of the principal and the role of teacher leaders. One of the keys to successful implementation of teacher leadership is the principal acceptance of the importance of the creating a culture where "the followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect toward the leader, and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to do" (Yukl, 2006, p. 262). These findings demonstrated the importance of the principals creating such a culture since the teachers indicated a desire and willingness to be more active in teacher leadership positions, and revealed they could be and wanted to be more involved in decisions and activities within the building that directly affected the process of school improvement. However, in order to achieve this, the teachers' input and voices must be heard and valued in a substantial way that will foster school improvement. Consequently, intrinsic values of the teachers were identified as key aspects for encouraging teachers to step into the role of teacher leader. Teachers reported they felt motivated by their inner desire and sense of gratification when they shared their talents and abilities with their colleagues and their students. By allowing teachers the power of becoming a teacher leader on their own, perhaps their morale and sense of self value will be heightened, thus motivating them intrinsically. The principal must create such a culture that will allow teachers to offer their skill sets to influence others ultimately impacting the learning experience for all within the school setting. The caveat: while teachers might want to seek teacher leadership roles, the lack of necessary time to successfully implement the responsibilities that come with the role are lacking, resulting in teachers being hesitant to volunteer for additional workloads. Responses varied in details, but overall the teachers felt discouraged from becoming teacher leaders because of the time commitment that takes them out of their classroom and also time that would take them away from their families. An additional caveat with time is that the majority of the principals did not note that the time

commitment of leadership roles by teachers was an issue, thereby perhaps not creating structures within the school day that would allow teachers to do many of the responsibilities of being a teacher leader.

5. Conclusions

The expectation for all schools to create an environment of learning for all students weighs heavily on the shoulders of educators resulting in the need for expanded leadership capacity. In order for successful school improvement to become embodied throughout the culture of a school, the roles of both the principals and teachers must change. Embracing teachers as leaders is an important step toward success, but it will require changes for both the teachers as well as the principals. Because teacher leaders are influenced by their principal's actions, it is important for principals to understand what motivates each of their teachers and take time to discover what is happening in their school environment that is discouraging teachers to become leaders. The responsibilities and behaviors of principals understanding and communicating the idea of teacher leaders and finding a myriad of ways to encourage teachers to step into those leadership roles is of utmost importance when considering the goal of student achievement. At the same time Angell and DeHart (2011) argued, "School leaders must understand that teachers may have the desire to lead and may have the skills to lead but administrators, in the understanding of leadership beyond the classroom, must provide the opportunities for these teachers to lead (p.156). As this research revealed, the importance of principals willing to utilize different leadership skills in order to promote teacher leadership is paramount in creating a school culture that enhances collaboration and collegiality among the school's members. School leaders must foster this leadership capacity within their teachers in order for school improvement to sustain and be successful.

6. Implications for Practice

The study's findings have a myriad of implications for building principals, school district personnel, and teachers. One of the most critical aspects of increasing teacher leadership is communication between the principals and the teachers. The differences in the perceptions between the principals and the teachers indicated a necessity for both positions to have opportunities to collaborate and design ways they could move toward a common goal. Principals need to be trained on how to cultivate teacher leaders concurrently with teachers being trained on what is teacher leadership and it can be both formal and informal leadership roles. While planning for professional development school districts would benefit by providing awareness programs on leadership capacity and how to successfully create a school culture that values such processes. Furthermore, opening lines of dialogues through reflection and professional development could establish expectations from varying viewpoints, enabling teachers and principals alike to understand the role of teacher leader and work toward school improvement by enhancing leadership capacity. Teachers willing and wanting to become

teacher leaders need opportunities to build networks, collaborate with fellow teachers, and focus on continuous learning to enhance student achievement. Careful planning needs to be done by principals and district leaders to facilitate such opportunities to include components that are essential to the development of the teacher as a leader. By establishing opportunities for participation, teachers augment teacher leadership roles, developing commitments toward common goals, and motivating themselves to have improved performance in their classrooms. Only by understanding teacher leadership can a principal effectively enhance the leadership capacity within the school setting. Principals need to be ready to embrace, encourage, and support innovation and creativity from their teachers and be prepared to celebrate leadership, innovation, and expertise they can provide to school improvement initiatives. Additionally leadership preparatory programs should address the issue of teacher leadership and provide opportunities for aspiring principals to understand and implement strategies that will enhance leadership capacity within their school settings.

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Glossary

School Improvement: results of making the teaching and learning process and conditions within schools better in order to support students in raising student achievement.

Teacher Leader: educators that work with fellow colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or an informal capacity

Appendix

Appendix 1. *Teacher Leadership Roles Survey* (TLRS)

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