Short Communication

Role of Teacher Leadership in School Development

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Abstract

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The teachers' role is not limited to transfer of knowledge to students. It also involves management and leadership positions within and outside the classroom premises. Teachers may provide resources, support, guidance and instruction of new teaching strategies. Acquirement of teacher-leadership position in school allows not only the development of the school, students, and learning methods. It also helps in maintaining the faculty members at the school through shared roles in decision-making.

Keywords: Teacher leadership, Guidance, Instruction, Accountability, Knowledge, Management

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are leaders in the classroom. Teacher-leadership assumes a wide range of roles to support schools and student success. Whether these roles are assigned formally or informally, they build the school's capacity to improve. Since teachers may assume leadership in a variety of ways, they can serve as leaders among their peers (Understanding Teacher-Leadership, n.d). In many schools, the teachers who were given more responsibility possessed more experience or stronger educational credentials. For example, in a 2010 study, it was observed that 93 percent of all teachers were fully state-certified in their subject area and grade level while 78 percent held at least a master's degree (Barnett et al., 2010).

Teacher-leadership is commonly referred to the teachers who have taken on leadership roles or additional responsibilities. This concept is closely related to voiced and shared leadership, which pertains to the distribution of leadership roles and decision-making responsibilities beyond the administrative team in a district or school (Lovett, 2018). In these types of environments, teachers can make decisions based on the work that directly involve the students. When a school places the responsibility to decide on teachers, the action occurs closer to the people, such as students and other teachers, who are directly influenced by the decisions rather than when the decision is made at two or three levels above similar to the position of the principal,

superintendent, or school board.

Despite these matters, the defined position of teacher-leadership increasingly serves as a cornerstone of a well-functioning school system considering the changing demands of the education profession. Such demands include more rigorous standards, high-stakes federal and state achievement mandates, increasingly diverse student populations, greater number of school-aged children living in poverty, and the fast pace of technological development (Lovett, 2018).

Teacher Leadership is No Longer an Option

The importance of teacher-leadership to student learning, teacher retention, school culture, school improvement, creation of sound educational policy, and productive, innovative teachers' associations has been demonstrated in both researches and practices. Those who have engaged in teacher-leadership in any way have observed its impact on the students and colleagues. However, the evidence on the importance of teacher-leadership is evident even outside the classroom premises. For example, regarding teacher retention, both new and experienced teachers who left the teaching profession have indicated that it was due to lack of shared decision-making roles and opportunities to lead (Follow-Up: Is Teacher-leadership Optional?, 2012).

Another example is the 2003 quantitative meta-analysis performed by Witziers, Bosker, and Krüger wherein 42 studies were assessed. In these studies, 37 presented the direct effects of teacher-leadership and remaining five studies were focused on the indirect effects. The study examined the extent in which head-teachers influenced student outcomes. The research indicated that less than 1% of the variation in student achievement was associated with the differences in educational leadership. The result of the analysis also suggested that the existence of heavy limitations have direct effects to the student achievement (Witziers et al., 2003).

On the other hand, in the review of 70 different studies, Marzano and colleagues (2004) observed the existence of contradictory evidences ranging from effect size for leadership and achievement as high as 0.50 (one-standard-deviation difference in results) to studies in which leaders who displayed the same leadership qualities had only a marginal or negative impact on student achievement (correlations as low as -0.02).

Skills Demonstrated by Teacher-Leaders

Through demonstration of teacher-leadership skills, educators can extend their influence beyond the classrooms to other people within the school and the community. This can be attributed to the teacher-leadership influence on mobilizing and energizing others with the goal of improving the school's performance particularly in the aspects of teaching and learning. It should be noted that mobilizing and energizing does not occur simply because of one's role as a leader or boss, for example in the case of the principal. Rather, these effects are due to the individual's informed decisions and persuasiveness. Therefore, an important characteristic of a teacher-leader is expertise in interacting and engaging with others especially in complex work. It also entails an unwavering passion for the core mission of the school and the courage to confront obstacles, which may threaten the school mission (Teachers' skills and readiness to use information, 2015).

Since the improvement of the school's performance frequently involves changing the ways employed in the previous operations, teacher-leadership often requires the ability to properly handle and manage change. However, this is not always the case considering that improvement may occur when teacher-leaders motivate their colleagues to become more skilled and passionate on their work. Thus, encouraging them not to do things differently, but to do them better. In other cases, however, teacher-leaders may identify an opportunity to employ a new practice that will improve the school's performance. In those situations, teacher-leadership needs the ability to persuade other colleagues to use a new approach.

So, what are some of the leadership options available to teachers? The following roles are several examples of the numerous ways in which teachers may contribute to the schools' success.

Resources Provider

Teachers may help their colleagues by sharing instructional resources such as websites, instructional materials, readings, or other resources they may use with students. Professional resources including articles, books, lesson or unit plans, and assessment tools may also be employed (Ten Roles for Teacher-leaders - Educational Leadership, n.d.).

Instructional Specialist

Teachers with the role as an instructional specialist aids in the implementation of effective teaching strategies. This may involve provision of ideas for differentiating instruction or planning lessons in conjunction with the fellow teachers. Additionally, instructional specialists may also conduct studies such as classroom-based research (Gulcan, 2012).

Curriculum Specialist

Curriculum specialists are expert in understanding the content standards, determining the association among the components of the curriculum, and the proper use of curriculum in planning instruction and assessment. All these skills are essential in ensuring consistent curriculum implementation throughout the school. Curriculum specialists can help fellow teachers agree on standards, follow the adopted curriculum, use common pacing charts, and develop shared assessments.

Classroom Support

Teachers that function as classroom support help fellow teachers implement new ideas through demonstrating a lesson, coaching, or observing and giving feedback.

The following examples describe some of the roles and responsibilities that a teacher-leader may assume in a district or a school (District-Level Leadership, n.d). Teacher-leaders may:

Serve on a school or district leadership team or on some other form of governance committee, task force, or board

Teacher-leaders may lead a specific school-improvement initiative. This may include program that is designed to

improve the quality of reading instruction throughout the school. Additionally, teacher-leaders can design innovative instructional strategies for their colleagues such as non-traditional ways of assessing student learning or even alternative methods of grading.

Train, supervise, and mentor new teachers or student-teachers

They may act as a learning facilitator or as an instructional coach who helps both new and veteran teachers to develop stronger lesson plans, improve their instruction or classroom-management techniques, or acquire new professional skills including the use of new digital and online technologies. They may also act as facilitators and coordinators of a professional learning community or other groups of teachers working together to improve teaching skills (Bolívar, 2011).

Lead efforts to modify or improve school-wide or content-area curriculum

Teacher-leaders may also guide other teachers in collecting, analyzing, understanding, and interpreting student-achievement data. Then, use the findings to improve instructional efficacy in a subject area or throughout the school (How-Do-Principals-Really-Improve-Schools, n.d).

CONCLUSION

The first most critical step in developing teachers is ensuring they have the resources needed to thrive. As this article has addressed, it is a collaborative effort where the teachers, administrators, and even district-wide leaders come together to review the data and address all concerns which will ultimately address areas such as retention and accountability in schools. Students

need to have updated curriculum and academic resources to be successful, and it is for these reasons that academic leadership in schools requires reforming and collaboration to address those concerns holistically.

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