Building Teacher Leadership Capacity through Educational Leadership Programs

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Abstract: For real school change to occur, both teachers and administrators must understand theoretically and practically “the nature of leadership and the complex systems in which leadership is exercised” (Bolman & Deal, 1994), however teacher leaders receive little or no preparation for leading. Inevitably, future administrators and teacher leaders must share the particular knowledge and skills that are manifest as educational leadership. This study used survey data to explore whether educational leadership (EDL) preparation programs enhance the leadership skills of participating teachers. The results revealed that teacher leaders in the EDL program gained opportunities for leadership and experienced increased support from their principals to apply leadership skills. The findings suggest that there is a relationship between the knowledge and skills acquired by EDL students and increased involvement in and support for teacher leadership.
Building Teacher Leadership Capacity through Educational Leadership Programs

Rationale and Background

Administrators cannot, and should not, be the only leaders in a school. The pervasive view of the principal as the sole instructional leader in school is inadequate and increasingly difficult given the current demands for accountability and student learning results (Marsh, 2000; Pellicer & Anderson, 1995; Smylie, Conley & Marks, 2002). The implication of teacher leadership for schools exists around a shared leadership model in an empowering learning community. However, the absence of a clear concept of teacher leadership limits collective action to effectively change schools and improve student learning.

Teacher leadership has been advanced as an essential component of successful school reform and the professionalization of teachers (Lieberman, Saxl & Miles, 2000). In order to maximize student learning, teachers must assume roles of leadership and take on more responsibility for school-wide change (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Muijs & Harris, 2003). Even though a number of authors have argued that teachers are a source of leadership within schools, there is a lack of consensus around a clear definition of teacher leadership. For example, Troen and Boles (1994) characterize teacher leadership as a collaborative effort in which teachers develop expertise and promote professional development to improve instruction to all students. Wasley (1991), however, provides that while teacher leaders benefit from collaborative arrangements they also have “the ability to encourage colleagues to change, to do things they wouldn’t ordinarily consider without the influence of the leader” (p. 23). Similarly, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) assert that “teachers, who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice” (p. 5). Childs-Bowen, Moller and Scrivner (2000)
proposed that “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). Moreover, John Gabriel (2005) describes teacher leaders as those who influence school culture, build and maintain a successful team, and equip other potential teacher leaders to improve student achievement.

A number of studies represent a range of understandings about the roles of teacher leaders indicating that in both a formal and informal sense teachers engage in important leadership functions. Teacher leaders take part in schoolwide decision-making (Hart, 1995; Paulu & Winters, 1998); mentor teachers (Fessler & Ungaretti, 1994; Hart, 1995); develop curriculum (Fessler & Ungaretti, 1994; Paulu & Winters, 1998); facilitate professional growth of teachers (Gabriel, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Smylie & Denny, 1990; participate in action research (Ash & Persall, 2000); foster more collaborative working arrangements (Blase & Anderson, 1995); and influence school change (Day & Harris, 2002). A study by Miller and O’Shea (1992) found that teacher leaders are distinguished by their knowledge, experience, vision, and respect for children. In addition, Miles, Saxl and Lieberman (1988) report that teacher leaders build trust and rapport, make organizational diagnoses, manage resources, coordinate work, demonstrate expertise, and share knowledge with others.

Studies have found that teachers participating in decision-making and collaborative teacher-principal leadership contribute to school effectiveness, teaching quality, and improvement in student performance (Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough & Johnson, 1999; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Marks & Louis, 1997; Ovando, 1996; Taylor & Bogotch, 1994). Similarly, several studies concluded that empowered teachers and distributed leadership impact
student performance as well as the teacher leader’s own professional learning (Lieberman, Saxl, & Miles, 2000; Sili ns & Mulford, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). Furthermore, when the collective capabilities of teachers are brought together to deal with complex problems, manage ambiguous tasks, and develop new courses of action then their commitment to the profession increases (Barth 2001; Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992).

A challenge for teacher leadership is the bureaucratic organizational structure of schools. Organizations, from a technical rational perspective, exist to achieve well-defined goals by applying formal structures and processes that prescribe roles and role relationships (Owens, 2004). The technical rational side of school advocates a traditionally organized institution held together by fairly applied authority and accountability for achieving results (Deal & Peterson, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Teacher leadership emerges as an essential component of school improvement within this traditional environment of formal organizational roles that define competence (knowing about educational leading) and authority (formal leadership roles). However, teachers are “almost never provided with lenses to help them understand the nature of leadership and the complex systems in which leadership is exercised” (Bolman & Deal, 1994).

Teacher leadership is not about empowering teachers by merely decentralizing decision-making authority. Rather, it is about mobilizing the frontline forces by increasing teachers’ access to resources, information and expertise in order to positively affect school change (Hallinger & Richardson, 1988). The practice of teacher leadership is a shared and collective effort that establishes the expectation for all teachers to be leaders at various times (Muijs & Harris, 2003). Central in describing the specifics of teacher leadership is the idea that leading is not restricted to formal positions, but is distributed to the entire educational community. A distributive leadership model emphasizes a perspective on “how leadership practice is distributed
among positional and informal leaders as well as their followers” (Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003, p.16). Accordingly, teacher leadership for schools thrives when leadership is distributed in democratic learning communities.

In an article that provides examples of teacher leaders who seize opportunities to improve educational experiences, take responsibility for their own growth, and coordinate resources to advance student success, Deborah Carr (1997) promoted "collegial leadership" as active participation and informed decision-making by all education colleagues within the school. However, there is little preparation for teachers and administrators to work together. Carr asserted that frustration and dissatisfaction of many teachers is rooted in their lack of understanding of the school functions beyond the classroom, such as budgeting, scheduling, and so on. At the same time, it seemed that many administrators lacked knowledge to be curriculum and instructional leaders.

In a study of continuously high performing schools, Linda Lambert (2005) noted that those schools had high leadership capacity, which she defines as “broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership” (p. 63). She found that as schools build leadership capacity, principals and teacher leaders become more alike than different as teachers begin to initiate action, take more responsibility for school effectiveness, frame problems, and seek solutions. This is consistent with Sergiovanni’s (2001) notion of leadership density. He argues that high leadership density means that many people work collaboratively, are trusted with information, participate in decision-making, and contribute to creation and transfer of knowledge. However, all too often, teachers lack the educational leadership knowledge and skills that will make them successful school leaders.
Sherrill (1999) reported that the teacher leadership roles, called for in current reform efforts, needed greater definition and more purposeful preparation. In identifying the leadership skills required of teacher leaders, Sherrill (1999) established core expectations which included demonstrating exemplary classroom instruction, knowing theories and research of teaching and learning, understanding theories of adult development, exhibiting knowledge of clinical supervision and procedures that promote effective classroom practice, cultivating desired dispositions among teachers, and guiding colleagues through reflective and inquiry oriented techniques. In a study by Dierks and colleagues (as cited in York-Barr & Duke, 2004) teacher leaders preferred content knowledge focused on organizational development and change, reporting that they wanted to learn more about school finance and budgets, school law, multicultural education, educational research, organizational change processes, and shared decision making. More than a decade later, DiRanna and Loucks-Horsley (2001) similarly claimed that “teacher leaders must develop expertise in organization design, change theory, adult learning, management skills, decision making, public relations and handholding.”

Principal’s Role

The relationship between principals and teachers is situated in a traditional hierarchical structure of bureaucratic management. A number of researchers have suggested that the primary obstacle to constructing a more collaborative leadership model is the teacher/principal relationship which is embedded in the tradition and history of public schools. Sarason argues that “schools will remain intractable to desired reform as long as we avoid confronting these existing power relationships” (1990, p. 5). Still, the fact remains, that the principal holds a key position in the school hierarchy and teacher leadership capacity is dependent on the attitudes and abilities of
school administrators to create conditions which are conducive towards an egalitarian model of leadership (Lambert, 1998).

However, the prevailing discussions about teacher leadership leave many issues unaddressed. For example, one cannot ignore the strong norms of isolation, conformity and autonomy operating in schools that make teacher leadership difficult to implement (Barth, 2001; Little, 1995; Lieberman, 1988). Furthermore, distributed leadership structures may place teachers with little or no formal power on a comparative standing with administrators who hold considerable positional power. It should not come as a surprise then that the extent to which leadership is distributed may be a function of the attitude and inclination of the school principal (Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Lambert, 1998). Consequently, in order for schools to be leadership rich, the traditional roles of principals and teachers must be renegotiated through knowledge. In essence, if teachers are to be empowered in democratic learning communities then formal preparation for leadership should include teachers.

Educational Leadership Programs

Educational Leadership programs in colleges and universities are designed to prepare credentialed school administrators. The emphasis, however, is on preparing candidates for formal leadership positions in educational organizations. Guided by recent calls for reform, educational leadership programs focus on team building, goal setting, collaborative decision-making, conflict resolution (Crews & Weakley, 1995), in addition to an increased emphasis on improving student outcomes (Cambron-McCabe, 1993). Many programs require students to go through the preparation experience in cohorts, enhancing meaningful and relevant learning as well as fostering a sense of community (Barnett, Bason, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Hill, 1995; Kraus & Cordeiro, 1995; Norris & Barnett, 1994). Significant internship experiences, where students
integrate practice with new knowledge and receive mentoring from practicing administrators, are among the most highly valued program experiences (Krueger & Milstein, 1995).

The national call for accountability of educational institutions has resulted in standards-based reform efforts of educational leadership preparation programs. The initiatives of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) are articulated as professional standards for administrator preparation programs. These standards for educational leadership programs call for preparation of school leaders who have the knowledge and ability to: (1) facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community; (2) promote a positive school culture, provide an effective instructional program, apply best practice to student learning, and design comprehensive professional growth plans for staff; (3) manage the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; (4) collaborate with families and other community members, respond to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilize community resources; (5) act with integrity, fairly, and in an ethical manner; (6) understand, respond to, and influence the larger political, social economic, legal, and cultural context; and (7) participate in an extensive internship. Preparation focuses primarily on developing school leaders for the most common administrative positions in elementary and secondary schools and requires demonstration of professional competence through supervised clinical practice (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002). Based on review of the literature, the need for specific preparation for aspiring school administrators has been recognized and many educational leadership programs have heeded calls for reform creating comprehensive programs that prepare instructional leaders who can positively impact student
performance. Despite the programmatic efforts to prepare transformative leaders there appears to be little or no provision for training future principals to expand leadership capacity in schools, and certainly little, if any, provision for training teacher leaders.

Traditionally, teachers who want to remain in the classroom and pursue graduate degrees enroll in curriculum and instruction programs, while those who want to be school principals enroll in educational leadership programs. However, many of the participants in educational leadership programs wish to assume more active roles in education reform and school renewal as teacher leaders without moving to administration. Advocating for truly democratic leadership structures, Hackney and Henderson (1999) proposed discontinuing the separate graduate education of future administrators and teachers asserting, “If inquiry-based democratic school leadership is to be made operational in the schools, both teachers and administrators must understand theoretically and practically what that will mean” (p. 72). Further, the distributed leadership perspective suggests that development of knowledge and expertise for leadership should be dispersed within the school community (Spillane, et al., 2003). Based on this and other studies (e.g., McCay, Flora, Hamilton & Riley, 2001), it might be expected that aspiring administrators and teacher leaders may require very similar practical and theoretical knowledge bases.

Inevitably, future administrators and teacher leaders must share the particular knowledge and skills that are manifest as educational leadership. Thus, they might be educated together without the barriers of traditional university programming with its emphasis on the continuing role of the principal as the solitary instructional leader. Consequently, rather than imagining more ways to lure teachers into administration, we might concentrate on how to redefine the
The purpose of this study was to consider whether the leadership skills acquired by teachers in an educational leadership program facilitate or enhance teacher leadership capacity in schools. The research questions that guide this investigation are:

- What teacher leadership dynamics occur and/or are enhanced as students engage successfully in an Educational Leadership program?
- How do principals accept and accommodate Educational Leadership students as teacher leaders?
- Can the knowledge base and pedagogy of an administrator preparation program foster and/or impact teacher leadership?

Assumptions and Limitations

It may very well be that Educational Leadership programs cannot make leaders out of people who are not already leaders. Essentially, it is assumed that EDL students are already leaders in their schools. In fact, all of the teacher participants in this study stated that they believed they were teacher leaders. This assertion is bolstered by Dewey (1933/1960) who argued that the role of teaching itself implies leadership because “in reality the teacher is the intellectual leader of a social group…not in virtue of official position, but because of wider and deeper knowledge and matured experience” (p. 273).

It is important to consider several limitations when reading and evaluating this study. This study is exploratory and any implications from its findings are speculative. This investigation is limited in that it used teacher and administrator perceptions to capture what they do in practice. This approach may provide only a very rough approximation of actual practice.
Additionally, generalizations from this study should be made with caution because the research was conducted only with teachers who are currently enrolled as EDL students in one state university and their school principals. The experiences and perceptions of this group may vary from students in other educational leadership programs. Additionally, teachers and their administrators volunteered to complete the survey. It is possible that those who volunteered were more positively disposed to a form of shared leadership or to this particular educational leadership program.

Sample

The data for this analysis are derived from a survey administered to Educational Leadership students in a large state university and their school principals in the spring and fall of 2004. The sample was purposefully selected to capture perceptions from EDL students and their principals. Surveys were administered to 84 EDL students enrolled in educational leadership courses in fall and spring of 2004. In order to promote a higher return rate, the surveys were administered in class. Participation of the students was voluntary and 62 (74%) useable responses were received. Each student was asked to deliver a packet to their own school principal containing the survey and a cover letter describing the study and requesting the principal’s participation. The school principal was to return the completed survey in an enclosed self-addressed postage paid envelope. Of the 54 packets taken by students to deliver to principals, 21 (39%) were returned.

Demographic data were collected only from the Educational Leadership students and not from the school principals who participated in the study. Slightly more than 70% of the respondents were female, with 58% of them teaching in elementary schools, 27% in middle schools, and 14% in high schools. Respondents' ages were rather evenly distributed across the
middle two of the four age categories (i.e., 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60), with approximately 38% of participants in each of the 31-40 and 41-50 age categories. Approximately 12.5% were in the 21-30 age category and 11% were in the 51-60 age category. The average years of teaching experience was 7.9 (R=1.5-22), and respondents had completed an average of 21 semester credit hours (7 courses) in an Educational Leadership program.

Methodology

A survey instrument was developed to collect data on EDL students’ level of involvement and principal support for teacher leadership. EDL students’ involvement was measured with a 17-item survey of teacher leadership activities identified in the literature (Table 1). Participants were asked to indicate the perceived increase in involvement of EDL students for each of the teacher leadership activities since participating in the Educational Leadership program. Principal support was measured with a 12-item survey of principal behaviors identified in the literature that support teacher leadership. Participants rated whether levels of involvement and support had remained the same or had increased using a two-point scale. The dichotomous scale is an attempt to measure the prevalence of involvement or support indicators only, rather than complicate the measurement process by attempting to capture estimates of varying classifications of involvement and support on a continuous scale.

Table 1. Teacher Leader Actions Reported in the Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader Actions</th>
<th>Literature</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional teacher organizations</td>
<td>Paulu &amp; Winters, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>Berry &amp; Ginsberg, 1990; Katzenmeyer &amp; Moller, 2001; Paulu &amp; Winters, 1998; Smylie, 1995; Taylor &amp; Bogotch, 1994</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses of individual EDL students and principals were aggregated to analyze the overall frequency of responses regarding levels of involvement for each aspect of teacher leadership measured by the surveys. Tables indicating the percentages were created to provide a sense of the proportions of EDL students and principals reporting increased involvement. An independent sample two-tailed T-test was used to compare the mean values of the teachers’ and principals’ responses. Comparisons with a p-value of less than .05 were considered significant.

In addition, EDL students were asked to discuss in open-ended responses (a) barriers to teacher leadership; (b) contributions of the EDL program to development and performance of teacher leadership activities; and (c) specific course activities or opportunities that prepared them for teacher leadership. School principals responded to open-ended questions about (a) whether...
EDL students differ from other teacher leaders; (b) whether they were more likely to include the EDL students in decision making; and (c) the advantages in having teacher leaders that have acquired educational leadership knowledge and skills.

To analyze and interpret the open-ended responses from the surveys the methods based on the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) were employed. Steps for constant comparative analysis aided in identifying patterns, coding of data, development of meaningful categories, and generation of themes from these categories in order to reveal broad topics. In coding the data, the author and a peer university researcher, whose areas of expertise concern the teaching profession, educational leadership, and school reform, independently reviewed the material for emerging themes and patterns. The researchers then compared notes for verification, clarification and elaboration of meanings and patterns revealed in the data. The use of peer review facilitated logical data analysis and increased the trustworthiness of the interpretations (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Triangulation of survey results with the open-ended responses provides additional support for the trustworthiness of the data (Merriam, 1998).

Findings

A survey asked Educational Leadership (EDL) students to respond to statements regarding their involvement in leadership decisions and actions at their school. The surveys contained statements of teacher leader actions based on the literature, shown in Table 1, asking them to indicate whether they felt there was increased involvement or the same level of involvement since participating in an Educational Leadership Program.

Results, displayed in Table 2, show that more than half of the EDL students, indicated hereafter as teachers, reported increased involvement in the areas of decision making (62.5%); collaboration with peers (60.9%); reflection on practice (59.3%); share ideas with colleagues
(57.7%); planning school improvement (56.5%); lead school committees (56.2%); and initiate school activities (53.1%). The teacher leader activities with the smallest percent of teachers (less than 30%) reporting increased involvement were creating partnerships with community (26.6%) and influencing the school budget (28.1%).

On the other hand, Table 2 shows that over 70% of the principals reported seeing increased involvement in planning school improvement; sharing ideas with colleagues; selecting professional development; reflection on practice; decision making; collaborating with peers; and leading school committees. Few of the principals, with a commensurate number of teachers, reported increased involvement in the areas of participating in professional teacher organizations; creating partnerships with community; designing school policy; and influencing school budget.

In comparing the responses of principals and teachers, noticeably higher percentages (66.6 to 77.7%) of principals reported increased involvement of teachers who are currently in or have completed an EDL program for eight of the sixteen teacher leader activities listed. Of those eight areas, the majority of teachers and administrators agreed on the increased involvement at their schools in six of the areas: decision making; planning school improvement; sharing ideas with colleagues; collaboration with peers; leading school committees; and, reflecting on their own practice.

It seemed, however, that teacher and administrator perceptions, reported in Table 2, differed on increased involvement by the teachers in the selection of professional development activities and in providing professional development inservices or workshops. A majority of the principals (77.7 and 66.6% respectively) reported that there was increased involvement of
teachers in these areas, while the majority of teachers (54.6%) reported the same level of involvement.

Table 2. Percentage of teacher responses to “How much more involved are you in the following activities now than you were before beginning the Educational Leadership Program?” and principal responses to “Thinking about teachers who are currently in or have completed an Educational Leadership Program, how much more involved are they in the following activities now than before they began the program.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Leader Actions</th>
<th>Percent reporting same level of involvement</th>
<th>Percent reporting increased involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional teacher organizations</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan school improvement</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign instruction based on student assessment</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share ideas with colleagues</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a mentor to new teachers</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help make personnel decisions</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create partnerships with community</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select professional development</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present a workshop to colleagues</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence school budgeting</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>77.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with peers</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead school committees</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on your own practice</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate school activities</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design school policy</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean scores (Table 3) represent the results of teacher and principal selections on a two-point scale indicating no change in involvement (1) and increased involvement (2). Overall, teachers (M=1.48) and principals (M=1.55) indicated increased involvement of EDL students in teacher leadership activities. The slightly higher means suggest the principals noticed the teachers’ increased involvement since participating in an educational leadership program (mean difference = 0.06). The items with the lowest means (R=1.16 – 1.39) from both teachers and principals related to involvement in professional teaching organizations, creating home and community partnerships, and influencing the school budget.

The results of the t-test analysis, summarized in Table 3, present statistically significant differences (p < .05) between teachers’ and principals’ perceptions regarding increased involvement for EDL students as teacher leaders. Table 3 shows clear agreement between teachers’ and principals’ on nearly every item concerning EDL students increased involvement in teacher leadership actions. However, responses to the survey item about increased involvement in selecting professional development revealed a statistically significant difference with principals (1.75) attributing higher levels of involvement than teachers (1.49). Additionally, two items, planning for school improvement and helping to make personnel decisions, presented large differences between teacher (1.55 and 1.32 respectively) and principal (1.75 and 1.55 respectively) responses that approached significant levels.

Table 3. Two-tailed T-test results for teacher responses to “How much more involved are you in the following activities now than you were before beginning the Educational Leadership Program?” and principal responses to “Thinking about teachers who are currently in or have completed an Educational Leadership Program, how much more involved are they in the following activities now than before they began the program.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item content</th>
<th>Teacher Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Principal Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional teacher organizations</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plan school improvement & 1.55 & 0.51 & 1.75 & 0.44 & 0.08 \\
Redesign instruction based on student assessment & 1.51 & 0.50 & 1.50 & 0.51 & 0.93 \\
Share ideas with colleagues & 1.73 & 0.51 & 1.75 & 0.44 & 0.83 \\
Be a mentor to new teachers & 1.54 & 0.48 & 1.63 & 0.50 & 0.45 \\
Help make personnel decisions & 1.32 & 0.48 & 1.55 & 0.51 & 0.08 \\
Create partnerships with home & 1.37 & 0.42 & 1.26 & 0.45 & 0.37 \\
Create partnerships with community & 1.29 & 0.38 & 1.26 & 0.45 & 0.85 \\
Select professional development & 1.49 & 0.50 & 1.75 & 0.44 & 0.03 \\
Present a workshop to colleagues & 1.46 & 0.50 & 1.65 & 0.49 & 0.14 \\
Influence school budgeting & 1.23 & 0.43 & 1.16 & 0.37 & 0.47 \\
Collaboration with peers & 1.69 & 0.51 & 1.70 & 0.47 & 0.94 \\
Lead school committees & 1.60 & 0.50 & 1.75 & 0.44 & 0.18 \\
Reflect on their own practice & 1.71 & 0.51 & 1.70 & 0.47 & 0.90 \\
Initiate school activities & 1.58 & 0.50 & 1.50 & 0.51 & 0.52 \\
Design school policy & 1.31 & 0.47 & 1.30 & 0.47 & 0.91 \\

*Note.* Highlighted items are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 4 shows the percentage of teacher and principal responses about items assessing whether principal support has increased for teachers since beginning the educational leadership program. Teachers indicated that their school principals more often encouraged them to gain new knowledge and skills (68.8%), offered resources (65.6%), presented occasions to share ideas and strategies (67.2%), recognized them for leadership roles (67.2%), and encouraged them to help other teachers (62.5%). In contrast, more than half of the teachers indicated no change in support for trying new ways of teaching (62.5%) and celebrating the success of colleagues (57.8%).
Clearly there was strong agreement among the principals (R=61.1% - 94.4%) as to their overall increased support for EDL students as teacher leaders (Table 4). Nearly all of the principals (94.4%) reported increased support for opportunities to present new ideas and strategies, time for leadership activities, as well as occasions to work as partners with administrators and to have work focused conversations.

Table 4. Percentage of teacher responses to "How would you characterize the level of support you receive from your principal as a teacher leader since beginning the Educational Leadership program?" and principal responses to "How would you characterize the level of support you offer to teachers who are currently in or have completed the Educational Leadership Program?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support actions</th>
<th>Percent reporting same level of support</th>
<th>Percent reporting increased support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Principals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to help other teachers</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided opportunities to share ideas and strategies</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to gain new knowledge and skills</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition for leadership roles</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate success of colleagues</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to try new ways of teaching</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation with administrators is focused on students</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicit opinions from teachers</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for professional development</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided time for leadership activities</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers work with administrators as partners</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided resources</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean scores (Table 5) represent the results of teacher and principal selections on a two-point scale indicating no change in principal support (1) and increased principal support (2). Both teachers (R= 1.31 – 1.68) and principals (R= 1.71 – 2.0) indicated remarkably high levels of increased support for teacher leadership activities. In contrast, the greatest differences were between principals’ and teachers’ reports on levels of support by the principal, described in Table 5. For all twelve items, principals (M= 1.91) reported higher levels of increased support than did the teachers (M= 1.56). Statistical evidence showed principals’ perceptions of their support were significantly higher than teachers’ perceptions on ten of the twelve items.

Table 5. Two-tailed T-test results for teacher responses to "How would you characterize the level of support you receive from your principal as a teacher leader since beginning the Educational Leadership program?" and principal responses to "How would you characterize the level of support you offer to teachers who are currently in or have completed the Educational Leadership Program?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item content</th>
<th>Teacher Mean</th>
<th>Teacher SD</th>
<th>Principal Mean</th>
<th>Principal SD</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to help other teachers</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided opportunities to share ideas and strategies</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to gain new knowledge and skills</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition for leadership roles</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate success of colleagues</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged to try new ways of teaching</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation with administrators is focused on students</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicit opinions from teachers</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
professional development

| Provided time for leadership activities | 1.57 | 0.50 | 1.95 | 0.23 | 0.00 |
| Teachers work with administrators as partners | 1.55 | 0.50 | 1.95 | 0.23 | 0.00 |
| Provided resources | 1.62 | 0.49 | 1.78 | 0.43 | 0.22 |

Note. Highlighted items are statistically significant at the \( p < .05 \) level.

Open ended Responses

When asked about how involvement in the EDL program has contributed to their ability as a teacher leader, 54.7% of the participants reported that the program was an important factor but not in a primary way, while 31.3% reported the program was a major factor in contributing to their ability as a teacher leader. Teachers' comments from open-ended questions indicated that the program afforded new knowledge, increased confidence, broader perspective of the system and greater understanding of the role of the principal. A few of the teachers stated that they now had more one-on-one time with their principals.

Teachers (89%) also reported their teacher leadership roles were enhanced through EDL course activities that incorporated reading and reporting on research literature, shadowing or interviewing principals, case studies, and field projects. In addition, several of the teachers listed specific courses, particularly school law and educational finance, had prepared them for teacher leadership.

The open-ended comments from principals indicated they related to EDL teachers differently and were more likely to involve them in decision-making. The veracity of the principals’ claims of increased involvement in decision-making is clearly supported by the report from the majority of the teachers (62.5%). Several representative statements presented by the
principals indicated these teachers: are more perceptive when analyzing situations; focus more on schoolwide issues; tend to see a bigger picture; ask more questions and have fresh ideas; are starting to 'see' things as an administrator; are willing to discuss different points of view; bring fresh insights to difficult issues; are more interested in the total operation of the school; are more reflective of their own teaching strategies; and think more globally and about what is best for the entire school.

On the other hand, analysis of open-ended responses from teachers suggested that they were gaining avenues for leadership because their participation in the educational leadership “[program] provided credentials to administrators so more information could be shared;” “when my principal knew I was in [Educational Leadership] he provided leadership roles;” and “[course] projects provided opportunities to try new leadership experiences.” It may be that these EDL students were able to overcome some of the barriers between the traditional teacher and administrative roles as they developed credibility and expertise.

Conclusions and Implications

Teacher leadership is not about empowering teachers. Rather, it is about organizing the largely unused leadership capital in teachers to positively affect school change. The practice of teacher leadership is a shared and collective endeavor that establishes the possibility for all teachers to become leaders at various times. The focus of this investigation is the relationship of formal school leadership preparation, particularly as developed in educational leadership programs, to involvement in teacher leadership activities and to increased principal support for involvement.

There are some important conclusions that can be drawn from this study that may have implications for a teacher leadership knowledge base. Teachers involved in EDL programs begin
to experience teacher leadership differently. From these ranks emerge school leaders with considerable knowledge in fiscal and personnel management, legal issues, design and development of curricula, delivery and assessment of instruction and contextual understanding of leadership and policy development. This study provides some support for the relative merits of teacher leaders obtaining the school leadership “know-how” offered in educational leadership programs. Results suggest there is a relationship between knowledge and skills acquired by EDL students and increased involvement in and support for teacher leadership. However, involvement and support of teacher leaders may be moderated by the principals’ perceptions of the teachers’ capacity and willingness to serve in leadership roles. EDL students, as result of course activities, may be perceived by principals as less passive and more willing to be involved in teacher leader activities. In addition, it seems that involvement of teachers in leadership activities is more dependent on the teacher-principal relationship than on leadership expertise of the teacher.

While many of the teachers (48%) identified administrators as a barrier to effective teacher leadership in their schools, as EDL students, these teacher participants indicated that through their educational leadership studies they were provided structured access and avenues for making connections with their administrators in productive ways. Teachers reported that principals supported them, as teacher leaders, with time and resources. Both principals and teachers agreed that the educational leadership program increased their knowledge of schooling and enhanced their leadership capacity. At the same time, these students engaged in activities that put their knowledge to use in practical terms and afforded them opportunities to exhibit their leadership skills.

In the context of this study, the teacher leaders as aspiring administrators were developing knowledge and skills in the day to day operations of schools, yet they remained less
involved in schoolwide strategic decisions around policy, personnel and budgets. Similarly, previous research found principals tended not to involve teachers in schoolwide managerial decisions (Taylor & Bogotch, 1994). It may be that principals in this study, as in other studies, prefer to run certain school functions without the involvement or influence of teachers. Then again, teachers may still lack knowledge and skills to participate in these areas.

Unfortunately, as teacher participants learned and practiced their skills and knowledge, they experienced resistance from other faculty and feelings of alienation. Activities in the EDL program promoted increased contact with the principal which seemed to alienate EDL students from their peers. The principals’ behaviors toward EDL students may have been interpreted as favoritism. According to Roland Barth (2001), sometimes teacher colleagues exhibit an “inhospitable” ethos to teacher leadership or believe that the teacher leader receives unmerited recognition from the administration. For many teachers (48%) in this study this was a barrier to teacher leadership. At the same time, in the context of this study, participants reported that their administrators began viewing them in a more collegial manner as they participated in school improvement activities. Does the increase of the particular knowledge and skills of schools and school leadership alienate one from their peers? Does administrator acceptance mean rejection from peers?

Teacher participants shared through their comments that as they became more involved in leadership activities they felt more confident and empowered. In fact, the EDL course activities pushed these teacher leaders into associations and dealings with the administration on issues beyond the scope of their regular teaching duties. The question remains, however, whether these teachers, as EDL students, were included more because of their increasing leadership knowledge and skills or because of their desire to make a difference and an increasing sense that they could.
Similarly, Taylor and Tashakkori (1997) argued that teachers that were high in participation and desire were empowered.

There were differences between the teachers’ and principals’ perceptions of support and it seems likely that the principals overestimated their own support of EDL students. The principals’ overdeveloped notion of their support for teacher leadership may be due to their own practical conceptions of what teacher leadership is and how to shape it. In general, a critical condition for teacher leadership is the extent to which school principals arrange structures to make leadership opportunities available to teachers. Even so, the significant differences between teacher and principal perceptions regarding principal support beg the question of how the concept of support for teacher leadership is understood and deployed in this context. In addition, the principals’ perception of support may be moderated by the EDL course activities that require the teacher, as EDL student, to work more closely with the administrators. Consequently, there are implications here also for the school principals’ support for EDL students as aspiring school administrators. This issue requires further investigation into the quality of the principals’ investment in teacher leadership as well as in future school administrators.

It seems obvious the potential of teacher leadership remains underdeveloped. Perhaps the problem here is the notion of “distributing” leadership roles and responsibilities without distributing the necessary knowledge and skills to influence real school improvement efforts. While educational leadership preparation programs deal primarily with preparing school principals, the knowledge and skills that facilitate working in democratic learning environments offered in these programs are not provided to teachers in their formal preparation programs. School improvement efforts may be enhanced by breaking down the barriers between the two
forms of leadership and preparing both teachers and administrators to lead in democratic learning communities.

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References


