

From Pre-Service to Teacher Leader The Early Development of Teacher Leaders

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Background to the Problem

Although the concept of teacher leadership is one that has existed for some time (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007), there has been a recent refocusing on the potential of teachers in either formal or informal leadership roles to contribute to improving schools (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010; Muijs, Chapman, & Armstrong, 2013; Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011) and increasing student outcomes (TPR, 2006). Public schools in the U.S. face ever increasing accountability measures as a result of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB 2001) and the adoption of the Common Core State Standards in the majority of states (Guskey, 2011). Linking teacher evaluation to student outcomes is yet another example of the pressure educators feel in the current U.S. educational climate. It is nearly impossible for school administrators to single-handedly support every teacher in ensuring that students meet or exceed expected outcomes (Xie & Shen, 2013). In collaboration with teacher leaders, though, school improvement efforts become more manageable. In addition, there is a growing body of research indicating that teaching is a key component of student success (Darling-Hammond, 2003; NCES, 2008). Teacher leaders support a culture of continued growth and ongoing learning in schools and can help colleagues improve their teaching practice.

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Additionally, teaching has been critiqued as being a flat career, as the responsibilities a new teacher has on the first day in the classroom can very well be the same responsibilities a veteran teacher has (Johnson, 2003). Teacher leadership opportunities can create ways for teachers to take on more responsibility without leaving the classroom (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Having role flexibility may be one way to decrease career stagnation and teacher attrition.

In connection to the desire to have teacher leaders in schools, there has also been a renewed focus on how teacher leaders are developed and supported. Research related to this topic concedes that traditionally, teachers have had few formal supports outside of graduate level coursework while on the pathway to becoming teacher leaders (Danielson, 2007a; Neumerski, 2012; Norton, 2010; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). Studies on teacher leadership point to the need for a continuum of preparation and support, beginning at the pre-service level and continuing throughout teachers' careers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2010; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). There is also some recent research considering the effect that novice teachers can have when acting in teacher leader roles (Muijs et al., 2013; Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011). However, there are few studies that document the early development of teacher leaders in pre-service teacher preparation programs, including its benefits and challenges.

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze pre-service teachers' conceptions of teacher leadership and to document evidence of the skills and knowledge necessary for teacher leadership displayed by pre-service teachers.

Review of Literature

The increasing interest in teacher leadership has also led to important questions about teacher leadership being raised. Most pertinent to this article are the questions of who can or should serve as teacher leaders, and what are the best ways to prepare teacher leaders. Traditionally, teacher leaders have been conceptualized as being seasoned experts capable of mentoring, with a wealth of experiences from which to draw (Muijs & Harris, 2004; Neumerski, 2012; Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011). This framing of teacher leadership as a role that is open only to veteran teachers may disempower novice teachers who could contribute to school improvement efforts through informal or formal leadership roles. Nolan and Palazzolo (2011) argue, "the original intent of teacher leadership as a reform strategy was to empower teachers to take action in ways that would benefit children and schools. The call to action was

directed at all teachers, preservice, novice, and expert” (p. 305). There is evidence that pre-service and novice teachers are interested in acting as teacher leaders, at least in informal ways (Muijs et al., 2013; Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011; Ryan, 2009), and that encouraging participation in these roles would be positive for teaching, learning, and the schools where these teachers were working.

Recently, literature on pre-service or novice teachers and teacher leadership has begun to emerge. This research points to a variety of reasons for considering pre-service and novice teachers in connection to teacher leader roles, ranging from philosophical, that “teacher leadership as a paradigm should include all teachers at various career stages, not only the most experienced (Nolan and Palazzolo, 2011, p. 305) to practical, as some schools are staffed primarily with novice teachers. Muijs et al. (2013) note “if it is the case that less experienced teachers are less likely to be involved in teacher leadership this has clear implications for schools with a large proportion of newly qualified teachers” (p. 769). In schools with high levels of teacher attrition, it could be beneficial to support less experienced teachers in developing the knowledge and skills necessary for teacher leadership.

Most formal teacher leader preparation occurs at the graduate level or once teachers are in schools, through professional development. There is a great deal of consensus around what can be done to support teacher leaders once they are in schools. Much of this research focuses on how school administrators can create conditions within schools that either support or inhibit the work of teacher leaders (Higgins & Bonne, 2011; Muijs & Harris, 2007; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000). Some of the contextual conditions that support teacher leadership include having an environment where trust is present, where dialogue can occur openly, and where there are values and vision in support of shared instructional practices. Having structures that allow for collaboration, teacher-driven, contextualized professional development, and reflective practice also are essential for teacher leadership (Hunzicker, 2012; Jacobs, Beck, & Crowell, 2014; Muijs & Harris, 2004).

However, there is less certainty about what or how preparing pre-service teachers for teacher leadership should occur. There have been some calls for addressing the concept of teacher leadership, as well as the skills and dispositions necessary for this role beginning at the pre-service level. Some researchers believe that failing to do so puts novice teachers at a disadvantage once they do enter the classroom because they are unaware of how schools are run or how politics influence decisions. For example, Turnbull (2006) proposes that “teacher education programs incorporate a ‘teacher leader component’ as a means of preparing new

teachers for the realities of school governance and the politics of leadership” (p. 458) and Ryan (2009) states “teacher preparation programs must make deliberate attempts to require the analysis of knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teacher leaders, and nurture these traits to ensure that change [school improvement] is embraced by new educators, leaders, and our profession” (p. 203).

Preparing pre-service teachers to see themselves as emerging teacher leaders positions them to approach their first few years in schools as a chance to “observe and analyze the school culture in which they’re working, so that when the time comes, they can use the knowledge they’ve accrued to bring about positive change” (Norton, 2010, pp. 1-2). Even with initial exposure to the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary for teacher leadership through pre-service preparation, ongoing support is necessary for teacher leaders once they are in specific teaching contexts to help them develop the skills and strategies necessary to lead in that context.

Conceptual Framework

While historically, there has not been a single definition of how teachers act as instructional leaders, most research outlined broad categories of formal and informal leadership towards a goal of improving teaching and learning (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Muijs et al., 2013; Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In 2011, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (TLEC) published a set of *Teacher Leader Model Standards*, which are intended to “codify, promote, and support teacher leadership” necessary to improve schools so that all students can be successful (p. 8). The standards include seven domains that address the multifaceted nature of teacher leadership:

- (1) fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning;
- (2) accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning;
- (3) promoting professional learning for continuous improvement;
- (4) facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning;
- (5) promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement;
- (6) improving outreach and collaboration with families and community;
and
- (7) advocating for student learning and the profession.

By outlining the broad domains that teacher leadership addresses, members of the consortium indicate the multiple ways in which teacher leaders can act as instructional leaders and contribute to school improvement efforts.

These seven domains can be particularly useful to researchers, teacher educators, and school administrators who seek to support the development of teacher leaders and the transformation of schools through teacher leadership. Specifically, for programs that are advocating for beginning teacher leadership preparation during undergraduate pre-service teacher education, these seven domains provide a broad framework for discussing teacher leadership, developing tasks related to the skills and knowledge necessary for teacher leadership, and allowing the evaluation of (through self-assessment or objective assessments) the degree to which pre-service teachers are demonstrating such knowledge and skills.

Research Context

This qualitative study describes and analyzes pre-service teachers' conceptions of teacher leadership and documents evidence of the development of skills and knowledge necessary for teacher leadership displayed by two groups of pre-service teachers ($n=77$) enrolled in an undergraduate education course (Fall 2010 and Fall 2011). The course is the second undergraduate education seminar that pre-service teachers take as part of a five-year combined BA/MAT program at a four-year, private university. The course was intended to support the development of three stances: teacher as a reflective practitioner, teacher as a professional, and teacher as a leader in the school community. In the course, pre-service teachers individually and collaboratively reflected on the role of teacher as leader, designed standards-based lesson plans, explored curriculum development, analyzed how diverse learners have their needs met in a school, and analyzed teacher leadership in the context of inclusive learning environments. Formal assignments on teacher leadership included an analytical paper on the role of teacher as leader, based on their analysis of scholarly articles on teacher leadership at the start of the semester and a reflective paper on their philosophy of education and on their beliefs about the role of teacher as leader in inclusive settings at the end of the semester. Informal assignments, class discussions, and collaborative in-class tasks were intended to support pre-service teachers' thinking about teacher leadership as well as to allow them to problem solve, role play, and collaborate to accomplish common goals.

In this article, I explore the following research question: What evidence of the skills and knowledge necessary for teacher leadership do

pre-service teachers display at the close of their participation in a course that focuses on teachers as instructional leaders? In this article, the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* are used as a framework to support data analysis.

Methods

This study used a combination of qualitative methods, including a pre-course/post-course questionnaire, document analysis, and focus group interviews. The questionnaire consisted of four open-response questions, through which participants were asked to describe the primary purpose of teacher leaders, characteristics or qualities of teacher leaders, benefits of acting as a teacher leader, and challenges of acting as a teacher leader.

The questionnaires were administered on the first and last day of class. The introduction to the open-ended prompts provided pre-service teachers with information about the purpose of the questions and assured pre-service teachers that the instructor would not see their responses until the semester ended nor would their responses be associated with their course grade.

Coursework and corresponding rubrics, including reflective and analytical essays, lesson plans and lesson plan presentations were collected to assess content and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Of the six main assignments for the course, four were analyzed for this paper. The first assignment required pre-service teachers to use literature and their previous experiences in schools (e.g., observations for undergraduate coursework, their time as students) to define and analyze the concept and practice of teacher leadership in an essay; for the second and third assignments, pre-service teachers developed and taught sections of lesson plans that aligned with the state standards and/or Common Core Learning Standards; the fourth assignment was an analytical and reflective essay that addressed teacher leadership in inclusive settings and their own trajectory in terms of development as a teacher leader.

Pre-service teacher responses to the four open-ended questions were analyzed using an open coding process. Typically 6-10 separate codes or groups of responses emerged during the analysis process for each question. Because some responses addressed multiple topics, these responses were assigned multiple, separate codes. Once all responses were coded, alignment or disconnections between the codes and the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* was recorded.

All relevant coursework was reviewed for evidence of knowledge and skills necessary for instructional leadership. The seven domains of

the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* were used to support the coding process of coursework. To analyze this data, each assignment was read and reread. Passages that aligned with any of the seven domains were coded. Attention was also directed to standards that were not addressed in the coursework, and to content in the coursework that conflicted with ideas in the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*.

Findings

Data across sources indicate that those pre-service students who successfully completed the course did demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary for teacher leadership, as defined by some of the domains outlined through the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*. For example:

Teachers often seek leadership roles outside the classroom to attain fulfillment. They can find opportunities in formal and informal ways. Having a leadership role is challenging because of the lack of training, lack of support and lack of acceptance from colleagues, but the rewards are priceless. Teacher leaders can enhance the quality of education, attain personal fulfillment and support the school's, principal's and colleagues' pressures to meet the needs of all students. (Participant NL, Task 1, p. 1)

These understandings relate directly to the knowledge and skills necessary for teacher leadership, as complex understandings of teacher leadership can be foundational to a willingness to pursue the teacher leader role. Pre-service teachers who successfully completed the course specifically demonstrated complex understandings of several domains of the Model Standards, including fostering a collaborative culture, promoting professional learning for continuous improvement, facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning, and advocating for student learning and the profession.

Domain Findings

Fostering a collaborative culture to support educator development and student learning. This domain focuses on teacher leaders working together with colleagues to create a sense of collective responsibility for success and to help colleagues improve their teaching and provide more opportunities for student learning. This domain was addressed frequently in both coursework and through responses to the purpose of teacher leadership on the questionnaire. For example, one response on the post-course questionnaire explained, "Teacher leaders work with their co-workers and other faculty to better the school and

the learning for the students” and another wrote, “The primary purpose of teacher leaders is for students, teachers, and administration to have a person that can relate to each of them and be able to transfer ideas to one another on how to make school better.” In connection to this domain, one pre-service teacher believed that “A guaranteed way to grow as a teacher leader is by working with other teacher leaders on curriculum, lesson planning, and classroom strategies. Together we can learn from each other and grow as educators” (Participant EF, Task 6, p. 8). Another noted “Teacher leaders identify a problem inside the classroom and instead of trying to fix the problem on their own they ask for help from the other teachers/faculty” (Participant AH, Task 6, p. 4). These pre-service teachers recognized the importance of teachers learning together.

Promoting professional learning for continuous improvement. This domain focuses on staying up to date on current research on teaching and learning and sharing this information with other teachers in the school through school-based professional development opportunities. This domain was frequently addressed through pre-service teachers’ coursework. One expressed that “Teacher leaders are definitely looking for ways to continue learning and expanding their own education” (Participant DF, Task 6, p. 4) and someone else wrote, “they are continuously trying to increase their knowledge in both their subject matter and pedagogy. They are also working to improve their teaching methods to find a way to meet the needs of all their students” (Participant DW, Task 6, p. 4). Another pre-service teacher stated that the goal of this collaboration was “making their school a better and more conducive learning environment” (Participant CP, Task 1, p. 1) and yet another pre-service teacher explained, “Change starts with one teacher that paves the path for other teachers to follow. Teacher leaders are teachers that are paving the path for their colleagues” (Participant CT Task 6, p. 1). Two others reflected more broadly on the responsibility teacher leaders have in helping their colleagues continue to develop:

In terms of colleagues the teacher, acting in the role of instructional leader, is there to share their knowledge, to be a teacher to the teachers if the opportunity presents itself and also to allow themselves to become the student if another coworker has valuable information to share with them. (Participant MiMo, Task 1, p. 1)

It is important that teachers investigate, welcome and utilize all the support available to them. Teachers must act as leaders and build a community of resources to enhance learning. . . . Sharing knowledge with other teachers, taking the lead in bringing new ideas and programs

to the school and tapping into the resources available are necessary to become the best teacher you can be and to meet the varied needs of all students. (Participant NL, Task 6, p. 2)

Pre-service teachers also articulated that continuous school improvement, as evidenced by increased student learning, was a primary purpose of teacher leadership more frequently at the end of the semester (57%) than they did at the start (12%) on the questionnaire. These types of responses demonstrate evidence of the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*.

Facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning. This domain focuses on supporting the improvement of classroom practice through a sharing of information and modeling effective strategies in order to support the school's vision, mission, and goals. Teacher leaders working in this domain may also participate in feedback cycles grounded in classroom observation or serve as team leaders. One pre-service teacher defined a teacher leader as "an educational leader is one who . . . recognizes problems, and does whatever he or she can to fix the problem" (Participant DF, Task 6, p. 4). Another explained she perceived teacher leaders as educators who

are the first to try new strategies or approach their grade level/content area team about a new idea they want to try in the classroom. Teacher leaders try to change the school and leave a lasting impact on their place of work and any student who walks through their door. (Participant MiMo, Task 6, p. 1)

A third pre-service teacher indicated she thought of a teacher leader as someone

who works extremely hard to make his or her institution the best that it can be. He or she works with fellow teachers and administration to effectively change curriculum and take on tasks he or she thinks needs to be altered. Although the role of teacher leader is difficult at times, I believe a true leader is someone who can take that difficulty and turn it around into a constructive change. (Participant DP, Task 6, p. 1)

Pre-service teachers' responses on the post-course questionnaire about the benefits of teacher leadership also indicate a belief that working as a teacher leader will lead to improvements in instruction and student learning. Approximately 64% of responses about the benefits of teacher leadership related directly to the ideas of helping students learn more or improving teaching and learning at the school. "Knowing that you are doing all you can to enhance student learning," "using your experience to help other teachers and improve the school," and "helping not only the students in your classroom, but also the students throughout

the school by working with other teachers” are a few responses which represent pre-service teachers’ understanding of the domain.

Advocating for student learning and the profession. On the pre-course questionnaire, no pre-service teachers mentioned advocating for student learning and the profession, Domain VII of the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*, but nine (12%) did on the post-course questionnaire. Teacher leaders with expertise in this domain have knowledge of how policy is made at different levels and use this knowledge to advocate for students and learning. This shift reflects a broadening in pre-service teachers’ thinking about what teacher leaders do. This teacher leader role was also discussed in several pre-service teachers’ coursework. One wrote, “A teacher leader should not be afraid to volunteer or stand up for someone or to fight for something. Teacher leaders should be first in line where change is concerned” (Participant CR, Task 6, p. 5) and someone else believed “being an advocate for students is another quality teacher leaders have. If a child in the classroom needs to have her voice heard or needs help, the teacher is the one that should help her out” (Participant CM, Task 6, p. 5). Another expressed

teacher leadership is not only stepping up and making sure one does a great job at their given profession, but also getting very involved in the school district to help as many people learn to their full potential as possible. Teacher leadership can be categorized as a teacher willingly taking risks in the school district despite possible conflicts all for the greater good of the school as a community. (Participant TG, Task 1, p. 3)

Yet another pre-service teacher explained

Educational leaders rise up to a challenge presented, advocate for change when they believe something should be reformed, such as scheduling or curriculum, make sure that teachers are heard and not ignored by principals and other administrators, and most of all love what they do, are passionate about teaching, and want to help students learn and succeed. (Participant NC, Task 6, pp. 5-6)

Many pre-service teachers, at the close of this course, clearly articulated how one part of teacher leadership is related to advocacy work. Perhaps in connection to this understanding, they also recognized that the work of teacher leaders does not always proceed smoothly, as differences of opinion will likely occur through school change efforts. For example, one pre-service teacher noted

Both types of teacher leaders [formal and informal] raise the voices of the children. Sometimes this is the most difficult part of being a teacher leader. In group discussion the other day, my group mates and

I were asked to select which role of a teacher leader would be the most difficult, and we chose advocating for the children because it may be intimidating to present a new idea to a principal or even in front of the superintendent. If one is not sure how to properly raise and articulate the students' voices without stepping on anyone's toes, the process of advocating for the children can become quite challenging. (Participant BM, Task 1, p. 5)

More than half (54%) of the responses on the post-course questionnaire indicated that conflict with the administration, peers, or community members in connection to advocating for changes in the school, instructional approaches, or curriculum might be the primary difficulty those acting as teacher leaders encounter.

Skill Development

Coursework indicates that the pre-service teachers were beginning to develop skills that would be necessary for teacher leader roles in the future. For example, all pre-service teachers demonstrated an ability to plan instruction that might meet the individual learning needs of their students, reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their implementation of those instructional plans, conduct research about ways to support diverse learners, and analyze case studies for evidence of teacher leadership. Pre-service teachers completed two standards-based lesson planning assignments, which required the inclusion of imbedded formative assessment and corresponding rubrics or criteria for success, as well as the facilitation of one learning task as part of the lesson plan. This facilitation experience served as the basis of post-assignment reflection writing prompts. Pre-service teachers were evaluated on the completion of the written and facilitation components of their lesson plans, using a mastery-based approach. Therefore, they were required to rewrite their plans until they demonstrated mastery. On the first lesson planning assignment, 74% of pre-service teachers had to revise their plans and resubmit them. On the second assignment, only 19% of pre-service teachers did not demonstrate mastery of lesson planning with their initial submission.

The reflection prompts, as well as the reflection portion of the fourth assignment (an analytical and reflective essay on teacher leadership in an inclusive setting) also demonstrate evidence of pre-service teacher skill development. For example, several pre-service teachers reflected on their growth over the semester and noted they have begun the process of learning how to plan in ways which support diverse learners, a skill they did not previously have.

I learned what exactly a teacher must do on their lesson plans to support all students. I previously thought that the aide or special education teacher with the classroom with students with special needs had full control of their learning experience. While I have learned two important new things, I would like to learn more about the modifications and accommodations that work best with common disabilities amongst students as well as what additional things a teacher must do to support these students. (Participant MaMu, Task 6, p. 5)

I feel I have grown a lot when it comes to thinking about students with special needs and diverse learners. In psychology classes I had heard before about multiple intelligences, but I never had to think of approaches for teaching students that had different skills in intelligence. So when we had to think about addressing diverse learners for our lesson plans, it was a first time scenario for me. Now that I have written two lesson plans, and also from reading the articles in class, I feel more prepared for teaching diverse learners in my future class. I have ideas such as the ones I mentioned earlier (performing skits, oral presentations versus written assignments, accompanying presentations with a verbal discussion) that I believe I will be able to implement in my classroom and put the students on a much more level playing field when it comes to actually grasping the material. (Participant MiMo, Task 6, p. 5)

Though they felt more confident about the knowledge and skills they developed over the semester, these pre-service teachers also recognized they still have much to learn and had ideas about how they could accomplish the learning.

Even within the selected pre-service teacher coursework, though, pre-service teachers excelled at different tasks. Some pre-service teachers were more effective at planning lessons, while others could analyze research about teacher leadership and articulate these ideas in writing more clearly. While it is natural for individuals to have different strengths, this finding also supports the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium's claim that "it is not expected that an individual teacher leader should or could embody the many dimensions of teacher leadership outlined in the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*" (2011, p. 9).

The Beginning of a Process

When using the lens of the seven domains of teacher leadership, it is apparent that participation in an undergraduate pre-service teacher preparation course is only the first step of many towards becoming a teacher, let alone a teacher leader. Most pre-service teachers recognized that becoming a teacher leader would depend on their ability to become successful teachers once in their own classrooms. One pre-service

teacher succinctly stated, “To be able to lead other teachers in improving teaching, I would first need to be able to achieve success in my own classroom” (Participant RM, Task 6, p. 2). Another pre-service teacher was particularly articulate, noting

Another area I need to work on is setting the goal to become a teacher leader. As a soon-to-be teacher, the idea of becoming an educational leader is far from my mind. Currently, I contemplate various teaching strategies I may use in my classroom, classroom rules, classroom setup, writing lesson plans, and many other aspects that deal with becoming acclimated with the classroom. As I become accustomed to being in the classroom and become more experienced and confident in skills within the classroom, like discussed above, the goal of becoming an educational leader should become more realistic. (Participant MaMu, Task 6, pp. 6-7)

Outside of collaborating with other pre-service teachers in the course on specific, structured tasks, the pre-service teachers were demonstrating the early beginnings of the skills necessary to be effective in the domains outlined in the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*.

Even though pre-service teachers recognized that improving instruction and outcomes for students, collaborating with colleagues, advocating for students, and a desire for ongoing learning themselves were components of teacher leadership, they often were unclear about how teacher leaders accomplished these tasks. Pre-service teachers in this population were particularly aware that they were just beginning to learn about how to differentiate instruction, even though they understood that this was a necessary skill for effective teaching. One pre-service teacher stated “Universal Design for Learning is something that I understand the definition of. However, I have a hard time implementing it in my lessons. I tend to write my lessons and then go back to modify them for diverse/special needs students” (Participant CC, Task 6, p. 5). Another explained, “I think my most important area of growth in understanding special needs students and diverse learners is how to develop teaching strategies and lessons for them. I am very aware that it one of my greatest shortcomings as a future teacher, and it is the area of my lesson plans that suffered the most” (Participant CR, Task 6, pp. 3-4). A third, in reference to meeting the needs of English Language Learners, noted “I have not learned much regarding how to differentiate the class for them” (Participant NC, Task 6, p. 5).

In addition, pre-service teachers in this study did not address one of the domains of teacher leadership at all: promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement and two others, improving outreach and collaboration with families and community and

accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning, were addressed only when specifically prompted.

Promoting the use of assessments and data for school and district improvement emphasizes teacher leaders having a capacity to support others in using classroom and school level data to improve learning opportunities for all students and to influence decisions at the school and district level. This domain was not mentioned in the coursework assignments outside of the inclusion of assessment activities for the lesson plan tasks. Although pre-service teachers did participate in activities related to analyzing data (e.g. from school report cards) and determining areas of strength and weakness at a school level, these activities were not mentioned on formal assignments in connection to teacher leadership.

The domain of improving outreach and collaboration with families and community was mentioned in passing by a three of the 77 pre-service teachers in the coursework analyzed in relation to teacher leadership. This domain focuses on teacher leaders working with colleagues to regularly collaborate with families, community members, and other stakeholders to improve learning opportunities for all students. One pre-service teacher wrote

I plan to develop a caring classroom environment, creative ways to reach out to all students of different levels in one discipline (math), and create ways to keep interaction between parents, teachers, and students as an open line of constant communication. In other words, I need to be a teacher leader. (Participant LA, Task 6, p. 5)

Though this pre-service teacher is primarily considering how interactions between parents, teachers, and students will help her individual classroom, she also recognizes that this collaboration is necessary for the work of teacher leaders as well. Additionally, three pre-service teachers (4%) mentioned collaborating with the community or with families as a purpose of teacher leadership and five responses (6%) about the challenges faced by teacher leaders identified families or parents.

Accessing and using research to improve practice and student learning depends on an understanding of how the inquiry cycle works and how it can support individual and groups of teachers in their ongoing growth as educators. Pre-service teachers were most likely to reference this domain in connection to academic research and how they could improve their own practice. For example, when they reflected that they were unsure of how to meet the needs of a particular group of learners, they also typically stated that they could either talk with other teachers or conduct research to determine how to do so.

I would like to expand my knowledge in learning how to effectively

differentiate for students with learning disabilities and ELL students. I want to be able to successfully work around language barriers. Ways to achieve such growth can be done through observing and interviewing teachers who have experience with both kinds of students and are at the expert level. I would like to learn effective techniques to ensure that if I am faced with a similar situation I will be able to handle it. (Participant NF, Task 6, p.4)

Finally, a critical component of being an effective teacher leader is being able to support the learning of and collaborate effectively with other adults. There also was no emphasis in the course on adult learning. It was a regular practice in the class to reflect on processes and activities that were used to support their learning and how these processes and activities might transfer into their own future classrooms. However, this reflection did not address how this could transfer to collaborating with colleagues or working across classrooms. Thus, the development of knowledge and skills that pre-service teachers did display was in relation to their own thinking about teacher leadership or the skills they would need for effective teaching in their own classrooms. These skills are certainly foundational to becoming a teacher leader, but evidence of them does not guarantee an ability to work effectively with other adults to support their learning.

Discussion and Implications

While pre-service teacher participants in this study were just beginning their journey towards becoming teachers, findings from this study show that as a result of participating in a course that emphasized teacher leadership, they are embarking on their pathway towards becoming teacher leaders as well. Literature on the development of teacher leaders consistently indicates that teacher leader development occurs over the course of a career (Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Muijs et al., 2013; Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004); this study affirms that a starting point for this career-long process can be pre-service teacher preparation coursework. Findings from this study also underscore the importance of focusing on the concept of teacher leadership, especially opportunities for early career teachers to act as leaders, over the entirety of a program, not isolating it within a single course. Though pre-service teachers in this study did show deeper understandings of concepts associated with teacher leadership as a result of participating in a single course, there were also significant gaps in their understandings and skills in terms of the domains outlined in the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*. Because the pre-service teachers were in the beginning of

their course taking in this particular preparation program, this finding is somewhat expected. However, if subsequent coursework does not integrate concepts related to teacher leadership, these pre-service teachers' thinking about the roles and responsibilities associated with it are unlikely to continue to mature.

There is much to be gained if teacher preparation programs integrate the seven domains outlined in the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* as they are supporting the development of new educators. The *Teacher Leader Model Standards* provide a deep, specific framework for outlining the possible roles and responsibilities teacher leaders take on once in the school setting. The seven domains outlined in the Standards more clearly articulate what teacher leaders may actually do, in comparison to earlier definitions of teacher leadership, which tended to classify the work of teacher leaders as being either formal or informal (Danielson, 2007b), or within and outside of the classroom (Muijs et al., 2013). These former categorizations were too abstract to support pre-service teachers in understanding how teachers acting as instructional leaders support school improvement.

In addition, the inclusion of advocating for student learning and the profession as a domain in the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* positions advocacy work, which can be viewed as risky or controversial, as an expected component of what teacher leaders do. Prior research connecting early career teachers and teacher leadership has indicated that early career teachers might shy away from "advocacy leadership" because it "tended to exude a sense of being on the outside and not supporting the status quo, which . . . was considered a threat to future tenure prospects" (Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011, p. 315). While explicit preparation in connection to this domain at the pre-service level is unrelated to the likelihood of earning tenure, it may increase early career teachers' recognition of advocacy issues when they arise and may add to a willingness to address the advocacy issues they encounter once in their classrooms and schools. Additionally, explicit inclusion of advocacy-oriented teacher leadership within pre-service preparation programs can begin to build the foundational understanding of change processes in schools and the skills of negotiating once in a particular schools context (Jacobs et al., 2014). Especially in connection to advocacy leadership, "preparation cannot simply be about the 'what' TLs need to know . . . but must also be about the 'how' of engaging in teacher leadership" (p. 594).

Using the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* to frame coursework in teacher preparation programs may also support the development of teachers and teacher leaders who can shift negative school culture where there is currently resistance to change or advocacy work. Pre-service teachers

in this study perceived conflict, either with colleagues, administrators, or parents, as being the greatest barrier teacher leaders encounter. Other research has indicated that “the presence of teacher leaders can conflict with many schools’ prevailing cultures of nonconfrontation, egalitarianism, and autonomy” (Goodwin, 2013, p. 79). However, other research (Lieberman & Miller, 2004) suggests that teacher leaders can contribute to changing the culture of schools, “so that systems, structures, leadership, roles, and relationships within the organization support their work (Jacobs et al., 2014, p. 579). Teacher preparation programs that consider the seven domains of the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* can prepare teachers with the dispositions and skills necessary to influence these negative school cultures. Promoting dispositions like the desire to work collaboratively, a willingness to accept constructive criticism as a result of peer observation, and a sense of collective responsibility for the learning of all students at the school lays the foundation for applying the skills that can improve school cultures. Underlying causes of negative school cultures are fear, isolation, and disempowerment of teachers. Teacher leaders might contribute to shifting negative school cultures by building relationships with and amongst teachers, by supporting the development of trusting and respectful interactions, and by working to improve teacher morale (Jacobs et al., 2014); in turn, each of these changes can help teachers to feel empowered.

Conclusion

With this study, I seek to contribute to research and to the practice of teacher educators. This study adds to an understanding of the development of teacher as leaders beginning at the undergraduate level, particularly in light of the *Teacher Leader Model Standards*. Participation in coursework specifically aimed at supporting pre-service teachers in developing the knowledge and skills necessary for teacher leadership did result in an increase in knowledge and skills. However, pre-service teachers are just at the beginning of their career; demonstrating foundational skills and knowledge for teacher leadership for particular course assignments may not indicate actual ability or stance in the classroom, pointing to a need for longitudinal research tracking pre-service teachers into their careers. Because this study only tracked the development of knowledge and skills while pre-service teachers were still completing their preparation, there is no evidence whether the changes they demonstrated had any impact on their teaching or leadership capacity once they were in their careers. Future research about teacher leadership and pre-service preparation should track pre-service teachers through their early ca-

reers. This would allow researchers to observe actual implementation of leadership knowledge, dispositions, or skills.

Finally, Schools of Education that are attempting to support pre-service teachers in their development towards instructional leaders must be willing to integrate this focus across courses throughout the preparation program. Because pre-service teachers in this study were early in their development as teachers and teacher leaders, there were still gaps in their skills and knowledge about teaching and teacher leadership. Teaching and becoming teacher leaders are complex processes that require ongoing support, so emphasizing the topic of teacher leadership in a single course is not enough to fully prepare pre-service teachers for this role. However, beginning the path toward leadership early is important, as it does contribute to the knowledge and skills necessary for leadership.

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