Teacher Leadership – Collective Actions, Decision-Making and Well-being

Hansol Woo
The Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

Gerald LeTendre
The Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

Soo-yong Byun
The Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

Deborah Schussler
The Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

The study of educational leadership suffers from a lack of precision in definition of key concepts (Modeste et al., 2020; Wang, 2018). This is particularly true for teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017) where the core leadership practices that teacher leaders engage in are collaborative in nature and take many forms, including mentoring other teachers, coordinating professional development, and leading professional learning communities (Klein, Taylor, et al., 2018; Lai & Cheung 2015; Mujis & Harris 2007; Von Dohlen & Karvonen 2018). In this paper, we discuss three key constructs of collective action: coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. We discuss the centrality of these concepts in modeling how teacher leadership is related to decision-making and teacher well-being in schools. We propose a consistent usage of these terms that will allow wider application when using international data sets to study the effects of teacher leadership.

Keywords: Teacher leadership, collective action, teacher collaboration, teacher decision-making, teacher well-being

Introduction

Roland Barth (Barth, 2001) famously declared that "all teachers can lead," and interest in increasing teacher leadership (TL) in the U.S. has steadily grown over the years. TL aligns with theories of distributed leadership (see Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2005) as educators within the school community, who are not administrators, adopt leadership practices outside of the traditional hierarchy (Gumus, Bellibas, et al., 2018). But, a precise and commonly accepted definition of TL remains elusive. Reviews of TL show there is a lack of consensus on how TL is conceptualized (Nguyen, Harris, et al., 2019; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). However, teacher leaders typically engage in leadership outside of the classroom while maintaining their classroom responsibilities (Wenner& Campbell, 2017). This generally means that, in the U.S., their leadership is not formally defined as it is in many countries (e.g., Japan, see LeTendre, 1994), but results from collective support by peers based on perceptions of a teacher's leadership strengths.

The essentially cooperative nature of TL sets it apart from administrative forms of leadership, which may or may not employ cooperative strategies. Administrative forms of

leadership (e.g., principal, head of school, or even head teacher) have organizationally legitimated spheres of influence and often clearly defined expectations for the tasks and responsibilities assigned to the roles. In sharp contrast, TL is often an organic quality that depends on the attitudes of colleagues (Smylie & Denny, 1990), and recognizes that all teachers can exercise forms of leadership by engaging with and motivating colleagues. While leadership, as a concept, is associated with individuals – their position and actions – in modern mass school systems, TL implies a collective aspect, at least in places like the U.S., where there are few, if any, organizational positions for teacher leaders to occupy.

This collective aspect of TL draws our attention toward issues of organizational culture, collaboration, and cooperation (Brezicha, Bergmark & Mitra, 2015). While the literature has not provided a unified definition of TL (see Wenner & Campbell, 2017), Nguyen, Harris, et al. (2019) argue that most studies emphasize that "teacher leadership is exercised on the basis of reciprocal collaboration and trust" (p. 66). This implies opportunities for teachers to lead are dependent on a diffuse, culturally conditioned set of norms that promotes shared goal setting as well as collaborative efforts to achieve these goals. The collaborative practices teachers engage in within a TL model can take many forms, such as developing or leading professional development (Boylan, 2018; Gumus, Bellibas, et al., 2018; Macias, 2017), forming professional learning communities (Lai & Cheung, 2015; Von Dohlen & Karvonen, 2018), mentoring other teachers (Klein, Taylor, et al., 2018), and serving in professional roles outside of the school (Boylan, 2018).

However, the terms we frequently use to describe these collective actions – *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration* – seem to be used interchangeably. We need to define and clarify how *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration* (3Cs) are to be operationalized and how they impact teachers' role in decision-making if we are to understand how TL affects students and teachers. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to (1) examine how collective aspects of TL have been used in previous studies, (2) propose a consistent set of definitions for how 3Cs are operationalized, (3) investigate the relationship between 3Cs and teacher leaders' decision-making, and (4) examine the impact of TL on teachers' professional well-being. For example, some evidence suggests that collaboration contributes to the professional well-being of teachers through increased efficacy, morale, or motivation and reduced feelings of personal isolation (Vangrieken, Dochy, et al., 2015; Weiner & Woulfin, 2018), yet most of these findings are not generalizable. Theoretically, teacher leaders may experience greater self-efficacy and job satisfaction (e.g., professional well-being), which may lead to improved student outcomes. To clearly understand how TL functions globally, and what its effect may be on important functions (e.g., decision-making) or outcomes (e.g., teacher well-being), we need to understand how *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration* have been operationalized in the past with regard to TL.

Coordination, Cooperation, and Collaboration in TL Literature

Research on TL has not made an adequate distinction among hallmarks of collective action: *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration*. However, there is ample evidence to show that these forms of collective action have positive impacts on teachers. For example, collective actions encourage the professional growth of teaching staff and play an important role in student learning (Poekert, 2012). In other words, teachers learn from each other while they work together in teams or groups to achieve common goals, such as improving student learning

outcomes and transforming educational processes. Collective actions also make teachers more satisfied (Reeves, Pun, & Chung, 2017; Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015) and confident (Moolenaar, Sleegers, & Daly, 2012; Zinke, 2013), which leads to teachers' increased focus on their professional learning and teaching practices (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Moreover, collective actions support teachers' commitment to collective reflection on pedagogy and exchange of their teaching practices and foster a professional culture of intellectual inquiry and learning climate in the workplace (Moolenaar et al., 2012; Westheimer, 2008), which benefits all students in the school (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Ronfeldt & Grissom, 2015; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010).

Defining the Three Cs

For our purpose, we use the term "collective action" to refer to three distinct kinds of action (i.e., *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration*) and integrate insights from both Castañer & Oliveira (2020) as well as Hord (1986). Following Castañer & Oliveira (2020), we define *coordination* as a relatively passive process whereby teachers agree to accept common goals and express a willingness to work toward these goals. *Coordination* simply indicates that individuals acknowledge group goals but make individual decisions about how to change their personal behavior to achieve collective goals. These group goals may be set by others, such as administrators, that teachers merely accept.

Cooperation indicates active interactions. Both Castañer & Oliveira, 2020 and Hord, 1986 suggest that individuals are assumed to be working toward common goals by engaging in *cooperation*. This does not imply that they necessarily had any specific role in creating those goals, but that they are actively engaged in more than individual activities. Teachers might cooperate in implementing goals set by the administration. As an informal process, *cooperation* indicates a willingness to participate in joint activities. *Cooperation*, for example, might include *ad hoc* discussions about how to implement a school goal.

Collaboration, using Hord (1986)'s insight, indicates active participation at all stages of conceptualizing, planning, and enacting. *Collaboration* is the most organic form of collective leadership as it indicates both joint planning and implementation. Collaboration as a form of collective leadership appears quite similar to how distributed leadership is often conceptualized (i.e., the interactions between leaders and followers to achieve a shared goal, (Bush, 2013; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), and so has theoretical implications that *coordination* and *cooperation* do not. These three separate forms of collective action have significantly different ramifications for teacher decision-making and well-being.

For example, research to date indicates principal support and increased planning time for collective action can enable teachers to exercise more leadership within schools (Brezicha, Bergmark & Mitra, 2015; Eckert 2019; Smylie & Eckert 2018). But what is not clear is whether this support and increased time result in actual collaboration in terms of making decisions and how to implement these decisions. Without true *collaboration*, TL is limited. Increased *cooperation* and *coordination* may help to achieve goals determined by the administration, but they do not expand the exercise of teacher decision-making capacity.

Recent reviews of empirical studies of TL have identified some factors that support TL and may modify school structures to promote collaborative opportunities. A shared commitment to collaboration and flexible structures that encourage innovation and team building (Nguyen, Harris, et al. 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) may affect both school structure and school

climate in ways that foster collaboration. A climate of collaboration may engender social relationships (e.g., collaborative ones) that have significant implications for a teacher's sense of well-being.

Collective Action in School Effects and Policy Studies

Work on teacher collective action in studies of school effects or educational policy provides some insights into how the three Cs operate. The TALIS framework has made considerable progress in documenting differences in teacher collective action across a wide range of nations. TALIS definitions, however, are slightly different from our own. In the TALIS, *coordination* includes the following activities: exchanging teaching materials with colleagues, engaging in discussions about the learning development of specific students, working with other teachers in the school to ensure common standards in evaluations for assessing student progress, and attending team conferences. These simple interactions among teachers could encourage them to access new ideas, teaching materials, or instructional strategies in their lessons (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Egodawatte & Mcdougall, 2011).

The TALIS attempts to distinguish the depth of collective action by distinguishing *collaboration* from *coordination* (OECD, 2009; 2014). In TALIS, *Collaboration* is a progressive group or team activity that usually encompasses a deeper level of commitment and a high degree of interdependence (Little, 1990; Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000). TALIS indicates the following activities as *collaboration*: Teaching jointly as a team in the same class, observing other teachers' classes and providing feedback, engaging in joint activities across different classes and age groups (e.g., projects), and taking part in collaborative professional learning. Teachers can improve instructional and classroom managerial skills by participating in *professional collaboration* with their colleagues (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009). Finally, TALIS uses *cooperation* as an umbrella term that contains *coordination* and *collaboration*.

Previous studies found that teachers around the world were involved in *coordination* (working toward collective goals or implementing collective strategies) more frequently, compared with *collaboration* which requires more time and energy to sustain it by pooling resources and by dividing labor (OECD, 2009; 2014; 2019; Steinert et al., 2006). Also, teacher *coordination* and *collaboration* were positively correlated across the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) participating countries. However, the frequency of *coordination* and *collaboration* varies by country. For instance, teachers in Australia, Italy, and Japan evince higher rates of *coordination* and *collaboration*, whereas teachers in Croatia, Lithuania, and the Russian Federation do not. Both activities were also affected by school characteristics such as types (e.g., private, public) and socio-economic status.

Many prior studies pointed out that teacher *collaboration* would be constrained by school resources and lower socio-economic status of students. Lower resources indicate a limited capacity of the school to provide support for teaching staff. Higher numbers of students in poverty mean teachers may need to more frequently engage with issues beyond classroom instruction. Schools with weak instructional knowledge among the teaching staff and ineffective instructional leadership from school leaders might create a challenging environment for teacher collaboration to grow and flourish (Johnston & Tsai, 2018; Stosich, 2016). However, some studies reported that teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to report engaging in team teaching and observation-based feedback (OECD, 2019; Woo, 2021). These studies argued that

several educational systems might provide additional support to socio-economically disadvantaged schools by facilitating teacher *collaboration*.

When we look at policy studies of TL, we also find that scholars struggle to identify differences in collective action. For example, a string search for "collaborate" (including all stem endings) identified 17 occurrences in the Teacher Leadership Competency (TLC) Standards and 9 occurrences in the Teacher Leader Model Standards (TLMS). TLC has devoted an entire competency (Competence 3 - Instructional Leadership) to "facilitating collaborative relationships." This competence calls on teachers as an initial ("emerging") competence to: "Understand the importance of a collaborative culture, articulate the need for such a culture, and work with colleagues to create a productive environment." But it expands this to "stakeholders" at the highest level of competence: "Engage stakeholders to collaborate effectively regardless of time or place." This suggests that collaboration is envisioned as a facet or aspect of the organization's culture, not as a limited set of routines or practices that focus only on teachers.

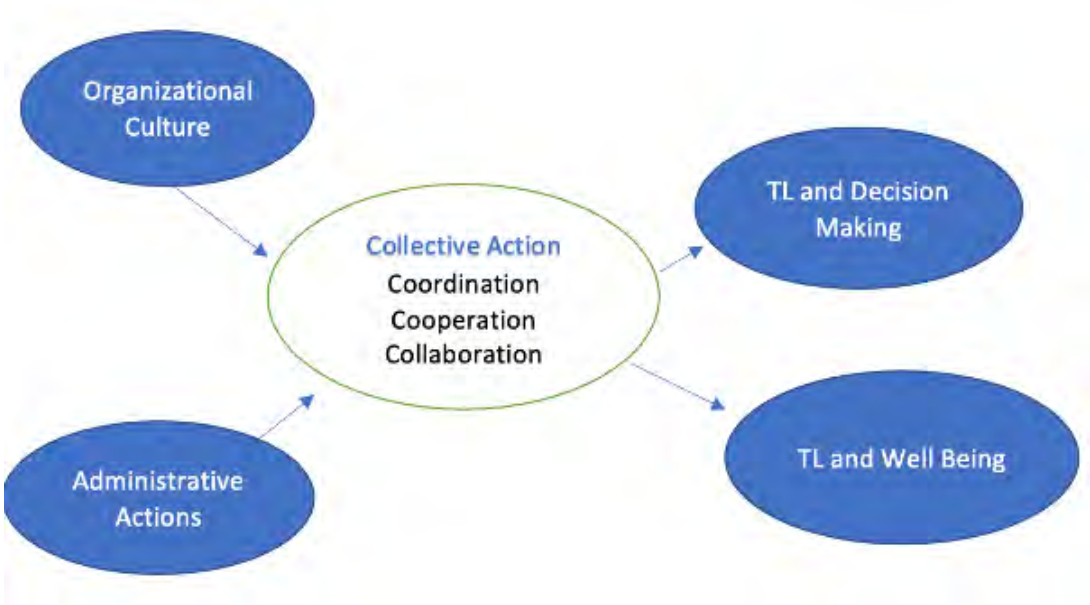
These studies show that it is important to not only distinguish the level of collective action – teachers might only engage in a surface-level exchange and *coordination* of educational resources and instructional strategies – but also the extent to which common goals and tasks are collectively decided. The extent to which teachers are active participants in the processes that set collective goals for a school, or establish common practices, is often overlooked. To truly attain an organic, collective process that involves teachers in setting collective goals and mutually supporting each other requires far greater time and energy than simply following a common directive set by an administrative leader. To effectively gauge the impact of *collaboration*, *coordination*, and *cooperation* on teacher's work and lives, we must first ascertain the degree to which activities within a school arise from teacher collective actions (as opposed to administrative actions) and whether or not the impetus for collective action is directed by the administration or is part of the day-to-day culture of the organization. This would allow us to more clearly distinguish cases in which there is true administrator/teacher collaboration. Actual collaboration between teachers and administrators would likely indicate that the goal of distributed leadership had been attained.

This emphasis on authentic or agentic collective action does not mean that "top-down" efforts to create common goals and routines are always ineffective. Creating norms and organizational routines that promote *coordination* and *collaboration* among teachers can be encouraged by school leaders, along with increased teacher participation in decision-making (see Bryk, Gomez, et al., 2015). External reforms can produce positive effects on teacher attitudes and student performance when they emphasize these key constructs. For example, research on Lesson Study, a model of professional development originating in Japan, has demonstrated that teacher collective actions are critical to school capacity building (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016). In a study of early childhood educators, Mowrey and King (2019) also found an association between collective action and agency in decision-making, as *collaboration* helped teachers be more responsive to student needs.

What these definitions fail to make clear is the degree to which teacher agency in collaborative practices is often hindered by "contrived collegiality" (Hargreaves 1994, p. 196). "Contrived collegiality" means that educational administrators replace difficult-to-control, spontaneous, and unpredictable teacher-led activities with contrived, captured, and contained forms of collegial work. Many U.S. teachers dislike their professional collaboration activities because the activities have been mandated in a "contrived" or top-down fashion (Jacob & McGovern, 2015). From the school leader's standpoint, collaborative practices could be a means

for monitoring the professionalism of the teachers, so it may foster conformity with existing norms and silence of members (Gunn & King, 2003).

Figure 1.
Collective Action, Decision-making and Well-Being



As depicted in Figure 1, the effects of TL are embedded in an organizational context where multiple factors and constructs are at play. Both school organizational contexts and school structural characteristics directly impinge upon how teachers express their leadership via collective action.

The cultural and organizational context of the school will drive the forms of collective actions that teachers have with peers allowing different levels of interaction and autonomy in formulating the goals, activities and professional learning that occur in the school. Teachers' ability to engage in collective action around key decisions will be critical to differentiating whether they can engage in true collaboration (i.e., all stages of conceptualizing, planning, and enacting) or merely coordinate individual activities in line with decisions about goals and strategic initiatives that have been decided by administrators or even policymakers.

Centrality of Collective actions in Decision-Making

Decision-making is widely regarded as one of the major ways that teachers can enact leadership and affect school functioning. Participation in decision-making in important areas of school life is associated with greater ability by teachers to express leadership (Ingersoll, Sirinides, & Dougherty, 2017). Internationally, Emira (2010) argues that expanding teacher's decision-making capacity is important for the success of educational reforms. A recent systematic review (Wenner & Cambell, 2017: p. 116) suggested that "influencing policy/decision-making beyond the classroom" is another key practice of TL. In other words, teachers who participate in decision-making processes in their schools and exert influence on broader educational decisions are enacting teacher leadership. In terms of educational efficacy,

shared decision-making (e.g., collective action) might also contribute to taking better approaches to school-wide problem-solving (Gonzales & Lambert, 2001), teaching and learning (Carpenter & Sherretz, 2012; Muijs & Harris, 2006), and promoting inclusive education (Vernon-Dotson, 2008). Ingersoll et al. (2017) found that "...both instructional leadership and TL in schools is strongly related to the performance of schools" (p. 14). This study focused on teachers' decisional capacity in schools and noted that "teachers' roles in establishing student discipline procedures and school improvement planning are the most strongly related to student achievement."

Recent cross-national analysis shows that the collective actions (i.e., *coordination* and *collaboration*), however, are weakly correlated to the degree of teachers' involvement in decision-making in the United States and South Korea, using PISA 2015 data (Woo, 2021). This finding led us to hypothesize that the TL practices that Wenner and Campbell (2017) identified (i.e., collective actions and decision-making) may be two independent constructs rather than interconnected concepts in practice. Woo (2021) also stated that the TL measurements should be elaborated in order to understand the differences among various collective actions and their relationship with decision-making among teachers across the schools. Further support for the idea that teacher collective action must be more precisely identified if we are to understand its impact on decision-making, comes from Stone, Horejs, and Lomas (2012). They found that across all levels of schooling, increased TL encouraged more collaboration and decision-making, in other words, TL was linked to the most involved form of collective action. Other studies in the literature also address the importance of teacher decisions in curricular and instructional domains as central to teacher agency and professionalism (Lai & Cheung, 2015; Luschei & Jeong, 2020; Woo, 2021). These show that increasing teachers' ability to make important decisions that impact core routines or subsystems within the school system is critical to operationalizing TL in ways that allow positive effects to emerge.

The problem, particularly in the U.S., is that leadership in schools has traditionally been constructed as an administrative function. There are only a few pathways for teachers to become leaders, except by switching to administrative roles. For instance, Sebastian et al. (2016, 2017) measured TL as the influence of teachers in Chicago Public School Districts on the following school policies: 1) Hiring new professional personnel; 2) Planning how discretionary school funds should be used; 3) Determining books and other instructional materials used in classrooms; 4) Establishing the curriculum and instructional program; 5) Determining the content of in-service programs; 6) Setting standards for student behavior. TL involvement in decision-making in U.S. public schools has often been constrained since accountability policies (e.g., the No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act of 2002) were introduced (Jeong & Luschei, 2018). For instance, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows that significantly higher percentages of teachers perceived that they had low autonomy in curriculum and instruction in 2013, compared with the percentages of teachers in 2003 (Sparks, Malkus, & Ralph, 2015). In other words, high-stakes exams and scripted curricula hinder teacher collective action (Barrett, 2009).

Given differences in how teachers and principals perceive teachers' opportunities for decision-making (Brezicha, Ikoma, et al., 2019), it is important to consider both teacher and principal perspectives on the opportunities for engaging in collective action within schools. How much teachers engage in collaboration may be connected to their ability to influence important decisions. "True collaboration" would indicate that teachers are able to participate in decision-making from the earliest stages (e.g., identifying what problems or issues need to be addressed) through enactment. This would have special ramifications for important areas like professional

development activities. As some researchers have argued that TL is most evident or most likely to be expressed in promoting peer professional development (Poekert, 2012), it will be critical to assess how much influence teachers can exert over the kinds of professional learning opportunities they are exposed to (see Taylor et al., 2011).

Indeed, the ability of teachers to make critical decisions about their own professional learning and well-being would indicate levels of TL that approach the kind of autonomy associated with professions. The relationship between the collective actions and decision-making is therefore critical to unpack, but it is not fully verified yet. Some studies argued that both collective actions and decision-making could create a synergy effect in improving student learning outcomes. For instance, teachers who collaborate and analyze the function of their schools and coordination could make better decisions for student learning with improved knowledge and broadened perspectives (Vernon-Dotson, 2008). In addition, TL in school decisions could support meaningful peer learning of teachers more effectively and efficiently (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Marks & Louis, 1997).

Teacher Leadership and Professional Well-being

Collective actions appear to be linked with broader decision-making that has widespread impacts on the school climate, student performance and perhaps even teacher well-being. When teachers engage in *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration* outside of the classroom, their well-being is likely impacted. Teacher professional well-being, like TL, is also an ill-defined construct that is often referenced in research through either its absence, using the construct of "burnout" (Iancu et al., 2018; Klusmann et al., 2008) or through its counterpart, using the concept of "resilience" (Gibbs & Miller, 2014). Teachers who feel better about their jobs are more likely to be resilient (Beltman et al., 2011; Schussler et al., 2018) and less likely to burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Well-being is a construct with many definitions (Collie et al., 2015; Diener et al., 1998). Aligned with Diener's (1984) conceptualization of psychological well-being in general, we use the term "teacher professional well-being" to indicate a teacher who adopts a more positive view of their professional work than a negative view. In other words, "positive and negative aspects may coexist but the positive dimensions are more pronounced than the negative ones" (Hascher et al., 2021, p. 3).

Not surprisingly, there is a lack of consensus on how to operationalize and measure teacher professional well-being. Consistent with Yıldırım (2014), we propose that *job satisfaction* and *teacher self-efficacy* function as comprehensive proxies to measure teacher professional well-being. Large empirical studies have found that job satisfaction is essential to teachers' positive emotions about their work-life (Collie et al., 2015; Toropova et al., 2020), and that a teacher who feels a higher degree of job satisfaction are more likely to display resilience in the face of challenges (Beltman et al., 2011; Howard & Johnson, 2004). In fact, in a review of literature on teacher resilience, Beltman et al. (2011) found that "teachers were able to cope with negative experiences, as long as they had regular, local positive experiences in their schools and with their students" (p. 192). Thus, it appears that both relationships with colleagues and administrators, as well as relationships with students, play a role in a teacher's psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being, also called subjective well-being, is often operationalized as, and assessed through, measures of *life satisfaction* (Diener et al., 2002). Life satisfaction may be appropriate to a universal population. However, this general measure lacks what Hascher et al.

(2021) refer to as a "domain-specific approach to teacher well-being" (p. 4). As Hascher et al. suggested, it is important to address what is salient to educators who are working in classrooms and engaging in TL. For many educators, meaningful personal interactions with students and colleagues (Doney, 2013; Hargreaves, 2000; Howard & Johnson, 2004) provided the ongoing positive experiences foundational for their resilience. In his investigations into the emotional geographies of teaching, Hargreaves (2000, 2001) found that for elementary teachers in the studies, all their positive emotions stemmed from their work in the classroom, specifically the "psychic rewards" they received from working closely with students. For the secondary teachers in the study, Hargreaves found their positive emotions derived from achieving content-driven "breakthroughs" with individual students. This indicates that personal interaction is important to teachers' resilience and that lack of personal interaction may negatively impact their professional well-being. This points to a link between collaboration and the positive impact such involved collective action can have on teacher well-being.

In addition to job satisfaction, self-efficacy is another important aspect of teacher professional well-being (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teacher self-efficacy is defined as the teacher's belief in their own capacity to positively impact student development (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Researchers found that teachers who engaged effectively in leadership practices reported increases in their feelings of self-efficacy (Basich, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). This increase in the teachers' experience of their workplace efficacy can have positive impacts on the teachers' professional well-being, on the classroom environment, and also on their students (Hoy et al., 2009; Schussler, et al., 2019; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Since collective action is tied to improved leadership practices and opportunities, it would follow that increased collective action would be linked to increased teacher self-efficacy.

Indeed, Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory suggests *competence* is one of the three necessary conditions for motivation and engagement. Furthermore, teacher burnout literature identifies low personal accomplishment as a key indicator of burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Zee & Koomen, 2016). As summarized by a recent review of the individual and classroom impacts of teachers' self-efficacy, "self-efficacious teachers may suffer less from stress, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and overall burnout, and experience higher levels of personal accomplishment, commitment, and job satisfaction" (Zee & Koomen, 2016, p. 1007). In short, self-efficacy is positively correlated with teacher professional well-being. A supportive peer network, especially one engaged in collaboration, would seem to offer multiple potential protective factors for burnout and disengagement.

When teachers engage in TL—aka, when they maintain their classroom responsibilities but also engage in *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration* outside of the classroom—their well-being is likely impacted. Whether this impact is positive, negative, or mixed likely depends on a number of factors and can mostly only be theorized as the research is in a nascent stage. Some evidence suggests teachers who engaged effectively in leadership practices reported increases in their feelings of self-efficacy (Basich, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2017), increased feelings of autonomy and empowerment (Chew & Andrews, 2010; Wenner & Campbell, 2017), "professional growth and increased leadership capacity" (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 162), and "a strong sense of purpose and satisfaction" (Chew & Andrews, 2010, p. 72), all indicating a likely improvement to their well-being. Specifically, researchers concluded that the essential practice is *collaboration*, which contributes to the professional well-being of teachers through

increased efficacy, morale, or motivation and reduced feelings of personal isolation (Vangrieken et al., 2015; Weiner & Woulfin, 2018).

The clarity in distinguishing *collaboration* from *coordination* and *cooperation* is critical to understanding how teacher collective action impacts self-efficacy, decision-making, TL, and well-being. Some research suggests teacher leaders experienced a decrease in self-efficacy when particular contextual factors existed. Specifically, self-efficacy decreased when teacher leaders perceived a lack of administrative support, role ambiguity, and unclear mandates (Nguyen et al., 2019; Shaked & Schechter, 2019), suggesting a decrease in teachers' well-being also.

Constructs like self-efficacy that are assumed to correlate positively with well-being, may be more nuanced and context dependent. Although there is an assumption that teachers' well-being improves when their self-efficacy, autonomy, and decision-making increase, evidence of how these constructs mediate the relationship between TL and teachers' professional well-being is mixed. For example, despite increases in teachers' efficacy, morale, or motivation, there is an indication that TL may be detrimental to teachers' professional well-being by creating tensions with peers, role ambiguity, and increasing teacher workload (Margolis, 2012; Reeves & Drew, 2012; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). This suggests the absence of "true collaboration," and indicates that other forms of collective action may, under some circumstances, negatively impact teacher well-being.

For example, Lawrence et al. (2019) found that work intensification, especially dissatisfaction with non-teaching related workload, was significantly related to reduced feelings of personal accomplishment and other aspects of burnout. Teachers, might for example, spend large amounts of time coordinating activities to meet administrator assigned goals but make little progress resulting in burnout. Teacher burnout has been linked to negative outcomes, such as reduced teacher-child relationship quality and student literacy skills (Hoglund et al., 2015). In sum, even when the teacher leaders experienced greater positive emotions of greater efficacy, morale, and motivation, the positive emotions were offset by negative emotions emanating from other consequences of engaging in TL, especially around workload and deteriorated relationships. Simply engaging in more and more *coordination* or *cooperation* without an ability to set the goals or measures of achievement creates conditions that can undermine teacher well-being.

It appears it is not just the practices of TL, but the context surrounding the practices that relate to changes in teachers' well-being. For example, researchers suggest there are leadership practices and organizational structures that correlate with teachers' capacity for practices that promote effective SEL program implementation. Not surprisingly, these include practices integral to TL, like having time to *collaborate* with colleagues, building a shared vision and setting goals based on that vision, using coaching to facilitate educators' reflective practice, and building partnerships across school and district hierarchies (Mart et al., 2015; Patti et al., 2015).

Conclusion

TL can be expressed in multiple ways, but we have shown that a careful examination of how teachers engage in collective action and leadership is crucial if we are to successfully distinguish what actions are associated with positive versus negative outcomes. Additionally, cross-national comparisons remind us that organizational structures may differentially affect teachers' ability to engage in collective action. Many nations do not have a professional class of administrators that are trained on a separate track from teachers, and in many cultures, a

predilection toward collective action is deeply ingrained. The idea of a teacher acting as an individual to assert her leadership among peers reflects the concerns and constraints of the U.S. school system. If we are to build a truly international theory of how TL is enacted, we must create clearer definitions of the level of collective action that occurs and find ways to more effectively measure these collective actions.

As Allensworth et al. (2009) concluded in their study of the Chicago Public Schools, the ability to collaborate and coordinate instruction with colleagues was essential for teachers' job satisfaction and retention: "Stability rates are higher in schools where teachers report more coherence in instructional programming—these are schools where the principal and teachers work together to coordinate instruction and programs in a coherent and sustained way" (p. 26). If we can more precisely distinguish whether schools (or national school systems) are characterized by *coordination*, *cooperation* or *collaboration*, we will be better able to understand the multiple effects that TL may have. This will provide clearer insights into how *coordination*, *cooperation*, and *collaboration* interact with the kinds of decisions teachers make and their sense of well-being.

This differentiation may be particularly important in understanding how TL works in schools serving high-poverty districts. In high-poverty schools or schools serving minoritized populations, there is evidence that it is even more difficult to develop and maintain structures for teacher *collaboration* or *cooperation.* Yet when either *collaboration* or *cooperation* exist, it may have the most benefit to students and teachers in high-poverty schools (Louis et al., 2010; Stosich, 2016). Schools with high percentages of students from impoverished or minoritized backgrounds tend to have higher teacher turnover rates and lower job satisfaction among teachers (Johnson et al., 2012; Simon & Johnson, 2015). This indicates that teachers face unique challenges to engaging in meaningful collective action in these schools. Identifying what organizational factors that positively increase collaboration would allow reformers to identify ways to promote TL and likely improve teachers' professional well-being (e.g., job satisfaction or self-efficacy).

To do so, we need to consider the cultural and systematic differences in not only the organizational culture of schools but also peer learning of teachers. In other words, are student teachers exposed to norms of *collaboration*? Are they inducted in ways that highlight collective action? Numerous teacher studies are heavily based on the western contexts, especially the US, but Shimahara and Sakai (1995) argue that teacher practices are culturally patterned. Many comparative studies illustrated the cultural differences between the US and Japan in terms of professional learning of teaching staff (Ahn, 2014; Howe & Arimoto, 2014; Kinney, 1997). Compared to the US, the induction programs in Japan highlighted sustained mentoring for beginning teachers (Ahn, 2014). There are richer collaborative interactions and learning practices among Japanese teachers throughout their careers (Howe & Arimoto, 2014). Reeves et al. (2017) also endorsed the importance of systematic relevance in teacher collaboration research using the 2011 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). They found that "collaboration during lesson planning" was the only variable associated with higher math achievement in the US among the five domains of teacher collaboration. However, all types of teacher collaboration were significantly related to student math achievement in Japan. Without a clearer differentiation of collective leadership among teachers, we cannot begin to further uncover the specific impacts of TL and how they impact students.

Teachers, in all school systems, are required to *coordinate* their teaching to national or regional standards and their instruction toward a shared goal that is set by school leaders. They

can also be required to *cooperate* through joint planning times. Thus, both *cooperation* and *coordination* can be conceptualized within a "top-down" approach. *Collaboration*, as we have defined it, requires teachers to actively create shared goals and voluntarily engage in group projects and planning to achieve these goals. In other words, there has to be "buy-in" by participants. *Collaboration* implies SHARED CREATION of goals along with joint work – the work is organic, and participants have both buy-in and an active voice. The academic research literature has not recognized the organic nature of the collaboration and the impact it has on teachers' ability to express, individually or collectively, their leadership.

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