Fostering Leadership Skills in Pre-Service Teachers

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Teacher leadership is about empowering teachers to take a more active role in school improvement. Current pathways to teacher leadership, namely the Teacher Leader Master (TLM) degree program and teacher-led professional development, mainly target in-service teachers. Less attention has been paid to teacher leadership training in current teacher preparation curricula. This article describes three instructional strategies for nurturing pre-service teachers' leadership skills in a teacher preparation program. The three strategies are (1) to encourage cross-domain and multiple perspective-taking among pre-service teachers; (2) to enhance pre-service teachers' ethical reasoning; and (3) to engage pre-service teachers in analyzing real-life teacher leadership cases. The specific strategies presented in this article can be used as examples for teacher preparation programs as they strengthen their efforts in leadership training for pre-service teachers.

Well-prepared teachers play an important role in providing leadership in their classrooms and are vital to "the decades-long push for school reform" (Task Force on Teacher Leadership, 2001, p. 2). The teacher leadership concept grew out of the realization that leadership is as important to teacher effectiveness as to administrator effectiveness. The teacher leader concept is not about training teachers to become school administrators, nor about "teacher power" (Task Force on Teacher Leadership, 2001, p. 4). Instead, it is about empowering teachers to take a more active role in school improvement. Current research indicates that teacher leadership is critical for both sustained school improvement (Kise & Russell, 2008; Lambert, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) and student achievement (Barth, 2001; Gabriel, 2005; Marks & Louis, 1997; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In 2008, the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB), which is the accrediting agency for Kentucky teachers and administrators and for programs of education at Kentucky colleges and universities, incorporated teacher leadership into the Kentucky Teacher Standards (KTS). The tenth standard of KTS requires that teachers provide leadership within the school, community, and profession. Specifically, this standard defines teacher leadership skills in terms of four criteria, namely, the level of a teacher's performance in identifying leadership opportunities that enhance student learning and/or professional environment of the school (i.e., the skill to take initiative in recognizing the needs of their students, school, and community), the level of a teacher's performance in developing a plan for engaging in leadership activities (i.e., the skill to approach the identified problem in a systematic way), the level of a teacher's performance in implementing the plan for engaging in leadership activities (i.e., the skill to complete the planned work), and the level of a teacher's performance in analyzing data to evaluate the results of planned and executed leadership efforts (i.e., the skill to

reflect and make data-driven decisions). How can a teacher acquire the preceding four sets of skills to meet this leadership standard? How can a teacher become a teacher leader?

Pathways to Teacher Leadership

Formal training is one important approach to developing teacher leaders. In Kentucky, the Teacher Leader Master (TLM) degree program has been created in public universities to help in-service teachers develop teacher leadership. A typical TLM degree program offers systematic study of leadership skills and practice critical for teacher leadership. For example, the TLM degree program at Murray State University consists of core courses in teacher leadership, classroom management, curriculum development, instruction for diverse students, and research to improve student learning. In addition, it requires a teacher leader candidate to complete two leadership projects (e.g., a classroom-level and a school/district-level project) in order to successfully exit the program. Some classroom-level leadership projects completed by 2011 graduates of the TLM degree program at Murray State University include, "Using Student Response Systems as Formative Assessment," in which the author describes her use of a classroom technology called student response system or clickers and its effect on her student achievement, and "Parental Involvement and Student Success," in which the author studied the patterns of parental involvement and student test scores in her classroom and offered some suggestions for encouraging parental involvement. Some school/district-level projects completed by 2011 graduates of the TLM degree program at Murray State University include "Teaching Life Skills in the Middle School," in which the author described the implementation of Life Skills training in her school and how it has changed her school, and "Getting Better Results from the Accelerated Reader Program at the

District Level," in which the author analyzed and presented the best practices for using the Accelerated Reader program across all of the elementary schools of one school district. The requirement of the completion of two leadership projects in TLM program offers hands-on experience for teacher leader candidates to develop their leadership skills.

A second approach to developing teacher leaders is teacher-led professional development. Semadeni (2010) described one model called Fusion, in which "teachers collaborate to study, experiment, and coach one another in research-based strategies" (p. 66). The Fusion model has been found to be effective in fostering teacher leadership because it recognizes the leadership potential in teachers and offers leadership opportunities to further develop that potential.

One commonality shared between the two approaches is that both target in-service teachers. To be admitted into a TLM degree program, one must have a bachelor degree and a teaching certificate. Likewise, one must have a teaching certificate and be an active teacher in order to engage in teacher-led professional development. What about pre-service teachers? How could they be prepared to meet the teacher leadership standard?

Leadership Training in Teacher Preparation Programs

The typical teacher preparation program has been found to be "a weak intervention compared with the influence of teachers' own schooling and their on-the-job experience" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 1014). Problems of the typical teacher preparation program could result from two historical divisions in teacher education, namely, the curricular divide between foundations and methods courses and the separation between coursework and clinical experience (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009). Typical teacher preparation in programs place more emphasis on teachers' knowledge and beliefs than on practice (Ball & Forzani, 2009). Moreover, even less attention has been paid to teacher leadership training in current teacher preparation curricula. For example, in most National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) accredited teacher education programs in Kentucky, a four-year curriculum in a Bachelor of Arts degree program in education is not likely to have a stand-alone course in teacher leadership. A research course is normally listed in the junior year in the course sequence. Student teaching is normally listed in the second semester of the senior year in the course sequence. One way to strengthen teacher leadership training in teacher preparation programs is to add a course in teacher leadership. However, a modification to an existing curriculum could involve lengthy approval procedures and other practical issues. What else can teacher preparation programs implement to foster leadership in pre-service teachers?

Strategies for Nurturing Pre-Service Teachers' Leadership Skills

An alternative to adding a course is to integrate teacher leadership training into existing courses in the teacher preparation program. We will describe three strategies that have been tested in an undergraduate lower division course commonly found in a teacher education preparation program. Psychology of Human Development is an education course usually taken by sophomores at Murray State University. The Murray State University 2009-2011 Undergraduate Bulletin (Murray State University, 2009) describes the course as "a study of the systematic changes in the cognitive, behavioral, social, and biological functioning of the individual across the developmental stages of life" (p. 202). The course was designed to help pre-service teachers understand the issues, concepts, and theories related to pedagogical knowledge, as well as to prepare them for the PRAXIS® examination. Though these strategies were originated when one of the authors taught this course, they can also be applied in other education courses for leadership training integration purposes.

First, encourage cross-domain and multiple perspective-taking among pre-service teachers. For pre-service teachers to gain leadership skills, there needs to be a shift in their vision and perspectives. The sooner they can move beyond their student perspective to the teacher perspective or the administrator perspective, the better they can prepare for the teacher leadership responsibility. We will share one activity grounded in this strategy. In the Psychology of Human Development class that one of the authors taught, there were students who failed to turn in their homework on time no matter how clearly late homework policy was given, how frequently reminders were sent out, or how many extra help opportunities were available. The instructor would prefer to adopt formative assessment and evaluate a student's work mainly based on its quality rather than promptness. However, a student who always submitted work on time told the instructor that he was lenient and his practice was not fair because he did not punish those late submitters. So, the instructor seized the opportunity to promote multiple perspective-taking and to foster the skills of identifying leadership opportunities that enhance student learning. The instructor presented this whole scenario in class to his students, who were pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers were asked to address the question: "If you were the instructor, what would you do?" Then they were encouraged to consider

the perspectives of students who submitted their work on time, the late-submitters, other course instructors (e.g., teachers), department chairs (e.g., principals), and NCATE (e.g., profession). After a heated discussion, the instructor summarized the points from different sides and retold the parable of the prodigal son for pre-service teachers to reflect on. A father had two sons. One was lazy, insubordinate, and ran away; the other son was a hard worker. Later, the prodigal son repented and returned home. What should the father do? Most pre-service teachers were surprised when they realized the similarity between the two cases and how a simple question can be viewed from different perspectives. This was a natural moment for them to benefit from the practice of cross-domain (education and religion in this case) and multiple perspective-taking (e.g., the perspectives of students who submitted their work on time, the late-submitters, other course instructors, department chairs, NCATE), which could help them to gain the skills of analyzing and identifying appropriate leadership opportunities more precisely.

Second, enhance pre-service teachers' ethical reasoning. Leadership and morality are two distinct constructs. Morality or ethical reasoning concerns the fundamental issue of what is right and what is wrong, whereas teacher leadership is more about what teachers can do to help their students and schools. Even so, a great leader needs to know what is right and, more importantly, needs to have the courage to do what is right. This is the case with teacher leaders. Consequently, it is helpful to engage pre-service teachers in in-depth discussions of ethical reasoning. The following was a discussion of ethical reasoning that pre-service teachers had in the Psychology of Human Development course. First, pre-service teachers were asked whether it is right (i.e., morally permissible) to take away property of another (i.e., steal). Why or why not? Second, immediately after presenting a synopsis of the movie National Treasure (Bruckheimer & Turteltaub, 2004), the instructor further asked them whether it is right for Ben (the main character in the movie) to steal the Declaration of Independence from the National Archives. If not, why is Ben depicted as the hero of the movie? While the movie is based on a fictional situation, and the Declaration is quite safe in the National Archives, the discussion did help pre-service teachers to understand the complexity of ethical decision making. As the movie indicated, if there's something wrong, those who have the ability to take action have the responsibility to take action. Pre-service teachers must be aware that they may have to make tough ethical decisions when they take initiative to fulfill their future mission as teachers.

Third, engage pre-service teachers in analyzing real-life teacher leadership cases. In addition to having the courage to take initiative, pre-service teachers

should also know how to implement their initiatives. The instructor author employed the following three-step activity to deepen pre-service teachers' understanding of teacher leadership. In step 1, the instructor asked pre-service teachers to write a response to the following question:

> Suppose you are a high school English teacher and you believe that a particular book (which could be controversial) is extremely beneficial for your students' learning. You want to use it for your own classroom. You tried to get your principal's approval but couldn't. What will you do to give your students the opportunity of using that particular book?

In step 2, the instructor handed out copies of a news report of a teacher suspended over the use of a controversial book in her classroom ("Teacher Could get Yearlong Suspension," 2008). Pre-service teachers were instructed to read the news report carefully in the given class time. In step 3, pre-service teachers were given the opportunity to write down their reactions to the news report. Together, pre-service teachers and the instructor discussed the possible stakeholders in this case (e.g., teacher, principal, students, parents, school board/school district administrators, other teachers in the school, the whole teaching profession), ethical issues (e.g., whether it is right to disobey one's supervisor for a good cause), leadership issues (e.g., how to get the principal's support), and practical issues (e.g., how to use that particular book for improving writing in high school students). It was interesting to find out that most of the pre-service teachers participating in this activity would not challenge the principal's order. For the question in step 1, many would simply give up the idea of using the controversial book in class. Few could articulate a feasible win-win solution to this dilemma. This activity led to the use of data mining techniques to analyze students' written responses to a teacher leadership dilemma (Xu & Reynolds, 2011). There is an urgent need to help pre-service teachers understand not only the structure in schools (e.g., chain of command and acceptable procedures or appropriate channels they can resort to if they happen to disagree with their principals when they initiate leadership activities), but also the importance of building trust among school stakeholders.

The Leadership Preparation That Pre-Service Teachers Need

Harris and Muijs (2005) found four characteristics that matter in nurturing teacher leadership: beliefs, structures, trust, and rewards. In a school where teacher

leadership can flourish, teachers, administrators, and students must share some common beliefs, including the belief that every child can prepare for success. A supportive school structure must be in place so that trust can be developed among teachers, administrators, and students. In addition, teachers need intrinsic or extrinsic rewards to take initiative in leadership activities for sustained school improvement and student achievement.

Teacher preparation programs cannot determine the rewards that might be available to teachers once they begin their careers. However, teacher preparation programs can help shape beliefs about teacher leadership among pre-service teachers. They can also help pre-service teachers understand school structures that allow teacher leadership and know how to work with or change such structures. Moreover, teacher preparation programs can help pre-service teachers understand the importance of trust among school stakeholders and help them develop strategies for building trust.

Developing teacher leadership skills in both in-service and pre-service teachers is important enough to sustained school improvement and student achievement that it must be actively incorporated into training programs for those already teaching and those preparing to teach. The specific strategies presented here can be used as examples for teacher preparation programs as they strengthen their efforts in leadership training for pre-service teachers.

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