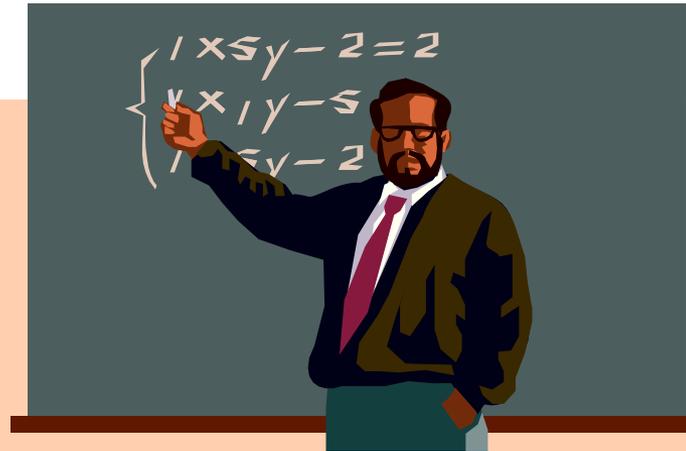


TEACHER LEADERSHIP: ARE JAMAICAN SCHOOLS READY TO EMBRACE THE CONCEPT?



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OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION

Part1

- Early origins of teacher leadership & factors contributing to its resurgence
- Teacher leadership: characteristics & domains of influence
- Teacher leadership barriers and supports

Part 2

- The Mona School of Education's new course on "Teacher Leadership" & its final assessment project
- Analysis of experiences of course participants in executing the teacher leadership project
- Implications for the future acceptance of teacher leadership as a school improvement strategy in Jamaican schools



ORIGINS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP CONCEPT

- Teacher as leader concept has origins in John Dewey's philosophy of democratic and progressive education in which....
- Classroom teachers are recognized as critical contributors to overall school improvement and success
- Recent resurgence in USA is attributed to disappointing outcomes of thousands of school improvement reform projects in the USA and worldwide and...
- Increasing recognition by school reform critics that....



ORIGINS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP CONCEPT

- *'...without teachers' full participation and leadership, any move to reform education no matter how well intentioned, is doomed to failure'* (Lieberman & Miller, 1999, p.xi)
- The demands of 21st Century will require a gradual shift from leadership approaches in which all power, authority and responsibility to successfully improve schools reside in the principal as leader, to more shared and distributed leadership approaches that will meaningfully engage classroom teachers.



WHY TEACHER LEADERSHIP?

- Impact of globalization has resulted in very competitive world economic environments that are more knowledge-based and technology oriented thus requiring more highly educated and skilled workforce to be successful
- Intense pressure on schools to “turn out” individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to survive in
- Education now has become more concerned with standards, testing and accountability



WHY TEACHER LEADERSHIP?

- Teaching has become an increasingly demanding profession with high attrition rates in some countries
- In this context it is being recognized that traditional hierarchical structure of principal as sole leader **seldom** brings about desired school reforms
- The multiple challenges in today's education context make it imperative for more shared and distributed leadership approaches that can meaningfully improve / reform schools
- Enter *teacher leadership*.....



TEACHER LEADERSHIP: AN EXPANDED VISION OF TEACHING

- “Central to this expanded vision of teaching is the idea that teachers are also leaders, educators who can make a difference to school and schooling now and in the future” (Lieberman & Miller, 2004, P. 11)
- While numerous definitions of teacher leadership have been advanced by various scholars it is acknowledged that the concept is still “full of problems and riddled with paradoxes”
(Wasley, 1991, p.154)
- Generally, scholarly discourse on the nature of teacher leadership portray the teacher leader as a specially motivated individual who is driven by an almost moral imperative to commit to and work for the betterment of students, colleagues and the entire school



TEACHER LEADERSHIP: AN EXPANDED VISION OF TEACHING

Teacher leaders :

- “ are never content with the status quo but rather always looking for a better way”, (Larner, 2004, p.32)
- Were Those who reached out to others with encouragement, technical knowledge to solve classroom problems, and enthusiasm for learning new things (Rosenholtz, 1989, p.208)
- ...are contributing to school reform or student learning (within or beyond the classroom) influencing others to improve their professional practice or identifying with and contributing to a community of leaders (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996, p.5)
- Teachers who leave their mark on teaching. By their presence and their performance, they change how other teachers think about, plan for and conduct their work with students. (Little, 1988, p.84)



TEACHER LEADERSHIP: AN EXPANDED VISION OF TEACHING

- Teacher Leadership principles include:
 - Modelling positive attitudes and enthusiasm;
 - Devoting time to do whatever it takes to make the school work better
 - Enhancing student learning through working with other teachers on improving pedagogy
 - Being recognized, appreciated, respected, and or valued for such efforts (Le Blanc & Shelton, 1997, p.33)



TEACHER LEADERSHIP: AN EXPANDED VISION OF TEACHING

- Teacher leadership ...is spontaneously exercised by teachers (any teacher) in response to a need or an opportunity through work with colleagues
- It emerges organically: no one appoints teacher leaders to their roles. And while administrators may (and usually do) play an important supporting role, the initiative comes from the teacher (Danielson, 2006, p.)
- Distinction exists between formal (role –based) and informal (community –based) teacher leadership



FORMAL & INFORMAL TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Role based (formal)

- Traditional roles,
- Bureaucratic
- Planned
- Individual leadership
- Exclusive

Community based (informal)

- Less positional
- Less structured
- Emergent
- Shared leadership
- Inclusive



TEACHER LEADERS: DOMAINS OF INFLUENCE

Within classrooms, across the school, beyond the school

- Teaching and learning
- Peer group professional development
- School wide policies and programmes
- Parent and community relations
- Developing teacher professional identity

(Danielson, 2006)



TEACHER LEADER ROLES AND SKILLS

○ Roles

- Resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, data coach, catalyst for change, learner, community of practice leader, school culture reform leader/supporter, researcher/scholar

(Harrison and Killion (2007))

○ Skills (desired)

- Collaboration, group facilitation, group dynamics, interpersonal skills, planning, data gathering, action and evaluation, mentoring, research



BARRIERS TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP

- Organizational context, **culture and environment** can promote or inhibit the growth of teacher leadership in schools
- Culture of **isolationism vs collaboration**
- Present school structures do not support teachers viewing themselves as leaders or viewing one another as leaders
- Teachers and administrators sometimes actively resist the creation and implementation of the new teacher leadership roles (Boles & Troen, 1994, p.8)
- Lack of time, unsatisfactory relationships with teachers and administrators (trust factors), lack of money to get the job done (Pellicer and Anderson, 1995,p.8)



BARRIERS TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP

- Concerns re teacher leaders not being able to fulfil classroom obligations (active teaching duties)
- Changed working relationships between teacher leaders and other teachers ; sometimes they hold them “suspect” (Walters & Guthro, 1992. p. 144) and “sometimes harbour resentment against them” (Odell, 1997, p 120)
- **Teacher leadership - between a rock (administration) and a hard place (own colleagues)**



SUPPORTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

- Teachers are unlikely to be able to engage in such leadership without a framework of support(Frost & Durrant, 2003b, p.4)
- Supportive factors (Murphy,2005, p.105):
 - **Values & Expectations** : Aligning values and expectations of institution with those of teacher leadership
 - **Structures** – support for teacher leadership demands the creation of new leadership structures in schools (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001);
 - **Training** - there is a need for teacher education programs that specifically train teachers to take on leadership roles (Smyser, 1995)
 - **Resources** – material and human resources and time are critical planks in the support framework bracing teacher leadership
 - **incentives and recognition** –school culture that celebrates teacher leadership is an indispensable element of support as well as a system of incentives and rewards



SUPPORTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP: PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

- The principal, it seems has a disproportionate influence upon teacher leadership –for better or for worse (Barth, 2001, p.447)
- Supportive principals must :
- Value **team effort**
- Have **supportive school policies** in place
- Be open to **new leadership structures** which support Teacher Leadership at both classroom and school levels
- Provide **training opportunities** to help Teacher Leaders build skills to assume the roles they play
- Provide **material and human capacity** and time



PART 2: EDTE6024 -TEACHER LEADERSHIP COURSE & THE FINAL ASSESSMENT PROJECT

- EDTE6024 Teacher Leadership – core course of new Masters Degree programme in Teacher Education and Teacher Development (SOE, UWI, Mona)
- This course introduces and explores the concept of teacher leadership.
- It focuses on providing participants with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to influence school culture, facilitate excellence in practice, build successful teams and improve student achievement.



PART 2: EDTE6024 -TEACHER LEADERSHIP COURSE & THE FINAL COURSE ASSESSMENT PROJECT

- **The main assessment task** requires students to design and execute a mini project at their school targeting an area that needs improving and assuming the role of teacher leader, demonstrate the behaviours and skills for executing the project drawing on the support of other colleagues
- **Prepare a detailed written report** on the experience within the interpretive framework of the literature and principles of teacher leadership



INQUIRING INTO THE EXPERIENCE

- The Sample : 47 students from 3 cohorts who completed the Teacher Leadership course between 2011-2013; two F2F groups and one OL
- Sought students' permission to use their work with the assurance of anonymity
- Formulated questions to guide the inquiry
- Qualitative research analysis strategies –identifying emerging themes and patterns
- Sharing the findings



EXPERIENCING TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Guiding questions:

- How did students feel about the final assessment task prior to embarking on its implementation?
- What kinds of projects did TLs attempt to execute?
- How did administrators and colleagues respond to the TLs requests to support their projects?
- What were the positive outcomes/surprises of the project implementation experience?
- What were the disappointments/challenges of project implementation experience?
- What are the implications of the experience for the “readiness” of schools in Jamaica to embrace the teacher leadership concept?



EXPERIENCING TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Q:How did students feel about the assessment task prior to embarking on its implementation?

- Apprehensive re response and support from colleagues, especially the principal and administration
- Concern about time for completing the project
- Concern about financial costs that might be incurred
- Fears that project might not succeed
- (few) Positive re anticipated support and expected outcomes of project



SAMPLE & PROFILE OF PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED

- 47 projects were reviewed from three cohorts of course participants for period 2011/2012 & 2012/2013 (2 F2F groups and one OL)

	Range of Project Types	Number
1	Improving Some Aspect of Discipline	6
2	School improvement-physical and teaching /learning environments	7
3	Improving performance in specific subject areas	14
4	Improving staff to staff interpersonal relationships	2
5	Improve student record system from manual to computerized one	1
6	Improving nutrition programme for children	3
7	Improving parent involvement and support	6
8	Improving interventions for special needs children	3
9	Mentoring /supporting beginning teachers	3
10	Staff welfare matters-	2
	TOTAL # PROJECTS	47



EXPERIENCING TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Q:How did administrators and colleagues respond to the Teacher Leaders' requests for project support?

- **Administrators** – Principals, Vice –Principals, Grade Coordinators, Heads of Departments
- The majority of Principals /Vice -Principals expressed total support for the projects to be implemented; of 36 responses received, 21 gave their immediate and total support; 9 agreed to the projects with conditionalities; 6 were indifferent or unsupportive
- This overwhelming support was explained by TLs as principals' reaction to a task that was long overdue but for which no one had previously taken the lead to mobilize



ADMINISTRATORS' VOICES....

- *Total Support* : **Miss..... Just go do your thing. You know my stance... Anything for the good of the children**
- *Conditional support*: **As long as you accept that Miss..... will coordinate the activities instead of you. You can be her assistant**
- *Unsupportive*: **You are acting as if you want to take away my job**



EXPERIENCING TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Colleagues' responses to the request for support

- Of the 36 projects that provided information on colleagues' responses, 19 were very supportive; 3 were supportive with conditionalities, 14 were indifferent or unsupportive
- High level of support based on personal friendships, recognition of value of project to the school and students' interests; comfort with fact that principal was supportive of project
- Colleagues who supported but with conditionalities raised issues regarding time "extra work" , need for financial incentives, their other obligations



COLLEAGUES' VOICES....

- *Total Support:* **We are fully on board with you. Its a long time we should have done something about this situation**
- *Conditional support:* **I will go along with it but why is it that every problem we have in the classroom people come up with solutions that require more work?**
- *Unsupportive:* **You only doing this for a grade dont?, so its not like you are trying to help the school for real!**



SURPRISES.... THE GOOD

- Ready support of majority of Principals & admin staff
- The power of existing school culture to influence for the good
- The power of the principals support to motivate
- Impact on TLs self confidence and professional growth
- The successful outcomes of some projects that led to adoption into regular school practices e.g. Breakfast programme, garbage disposal and recycling initiatives, competitions to improve students performance in various subjects
- The power of “one”. “I have learned that one individual can make a difference even if everyone else has not made any move in the direction for change”



SURPRISES.....THE BAD

- General Apathy of colleagues
- Principals reluctance to integrate project activity into school activities “regular schedule must not be disturbed”
- Extent of non-support of some principals (e.g not allowing use of school phone for making contacts regarding fundraising for the project)
- Colleagues’ inability to make a connection between the project activities and their potential to improve the particular challenge being experienced by teachers
- The power of existing school culture to influence for the bad



THE IMPLICATIONS : SCHOOLS' READINESS TO EMBRACE TL

- Principals' majority support of TLs projects –is a hopeful sign, even though motive might have more to do with the relief of someone stepping forward to address a long standing problem of the school rather than with a genuine belief in and professional stance that the teacher as leader is an approach to be valued and prioritized (Katzenmeyer & Moller 2001)
- Several of the course participants felt that their principals should in fact be required to do the Teacher Leadership course as this would increase their understanding of the concept and therefore their support of teacher leadership in schools



THE IMPLICATIONS : SCHOOLS' READINESS TO EMBRACE TL

- Attitude of the teacher colleagues is less encouraging and less indicative of readiness; many failed to even make the link between the project and the potential to improve a problematic situation.
- Perhaps teacher education programmes do need to place emphasis on some element of leadership training for all teachers , so that they can begin to regard leadership as a natural part of what they do
- The outcome of such training could be that... “Teachers assume leadership naturally as part of a more professional conception of work” (Darling-Hammond, 1995, p.88)



THE IMPLICATIONS : SCHOOLS' READINESS TO EMBRACE TL

- The most encouraging sign of readiness is the response of the course participants to experiencing the role of teacher leader.
- Many of them felt that without a legitimate reason (doing the assignment) for engaging in the TL project at their school they would never even have thought of undertaking such an activity because of their fears of rejection and failure
- They had learned many valuable lessons about how to work with others, motivate others, cope with challenges and leading a group and the course had been beneficial to them in that regard



THE IMPLICATIONS : SCHOOLS' READINESS TO EMBRACE TL

- One student's comment:
- “despite the fact that the implementation of this project was very challenging, I must admit that the personal gratification that was derived from it made it worthwhile. This is due to the fact that I can now prove in a practical way that I am actively involved in improving the students' learning opportunities”



CONCLUSION

Verdict?

- The potential exists for teacher leadership as a concept to gain ground in our schools as more teachers learn about it through the course and as more principals become aware and knowledgeable about the potential of teacher leadership to contribute to positive transformation of their schools.

○ THANK YOU

