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An Examination of Teacher Leadership Perceptions of Teachers and Building Administrators Using a Comparative Case Study Approach

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AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP PERCEPTIONS OF
TEACHERS AND BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS USING A COMPARATIVE
CASE STUDY APPROACH

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Matthew E. Curci

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
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Title: An Examination of Perceptions of Teacher Leadership of Teachers and Building Administrators Using a Comparative Case Study Approach

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The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teacher leadership through the eyes of both teachers and building administrators. As the pressure among public school educators to improve student achievement continues to grow, it is increasingly clear that no one individual can get the job done alone. While schools seek to take on a distributed approach to leadership, incorporating teachers into their leadership practice, there are differing approaches and levels of success with regard to accomplishing this task. By recognizing how teachers and principals perceive teacher leadership, school districts may better establish a culture of collaboration that may capitalize on teacher strengths and expertise.

This study utilizes a comparative case study approach, examining two school districts that have committed to promoting teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice. Individual interviews were used to obtain the perceptions of both teachers and principals within these districts, based on their experiences within the school setting and centering on the role of teacher

leaders, how teacher leaders may be supported, the obstacles to teacher leadership, and how teacher leaders are identified.

The findings and conclusions of this study show that teachers and principals both value teacher leadership, with similar recognition to the obstacles that prevent teacher leadership from occurring. While both groups place their emphasis on student achievement, teacher responses indicate a greater emphasis on collaboration and cooperation with colleagues than building administrators, who focus more on accomplishing objectives. These differences are minimal, however, as the importance of both collaboration and task accomplishment is noted by both teachers and principals. Recommendations are based on how communication and development of school culture can develop a distributed approach to school leadership.

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I am very thankful for the blessings of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the opportunity to be part of such a great educational experience where I learned from so many wonderful people. I pray that my work and efforts are pleasing to Him.

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A final recognition is of the members of Cohort 9. We had a truly unique collection of individuals, who learned from one another and were able to laugh along the way. Thanks to every one of you for the support, the humor, the inspiration, and the friendship.

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CHAPTER ONE

PURPOSE

Introduction

The need for leadership within the public education system has never been greater. The advent of No Child Left Behind policy has brought about an era of accountability for public schools unrivaled in previous years. Schools are under tremendous pressure to improve results for all students, with a focus on those previously underserved (Danielson, 2006). Classrooms must function based on data and research proven methods, incorporating best practices that will yield gains for students on both ends of the spectrum of performance level. The ability to differentiate instruction based on individual needs is imperative in order to increase student achievement, and teachers are required to reach all students to truly be deemed effective. How teachers reach this level of proficiency depends greatly on both how they are educated and how they are empowered to do so.

While the traditional view of a school leader has often pointed solely to the building principal or other administrators, it is recognized that this no longer can be the case. The demands of the modern principal are nearly impossible to meet (Danielson, 2007). Ensuring a curriculum aligned to standards, promoting best practices for teaching, evaluating staff, facilitating meetings, evaluating student needs, and encouraging collaboration from community is a tall order. Incorporate student discipline and the myriad of paperwork and reports required by the state and other educational agencies and it is evident that the role of "leader" within a

school can no longer fall on the shoulders of a single individual. Not only are there not enough hours in the day, but also it is nearly impossible for one person to be an expert in each area. Hence, the need to expand leadership roles within the school has pointed ever more clearly to the faculty.

Increasingly, school districts have strived to develop a distributed approach to leadership and decision-making within their schools. Such an approach does not entail simply a "top-down" delegation of duties or responsibilities in order to lighten the load of the administration, but rather creates an atmosphere where stakeholders are solicited and encouraged to use their individual talents and expertise toward achieving a common goal (Spillane, 2006). Teachers, who hold the responsibility for student performance in their classrooms, possess the experience and know-how that principals often cannot fully possess without the direct day-to-day interaction with the students.

James Spillane, who has been at the forefront of distributed leadership theory, states that in "a distributed perspective, it is the collective *interactions* among leaders, followers, and their situation that is paramount" (2006, p.4). While principals serve as the formal leader within a given school, they must be able to promote a climate where leadership opportunities emerge for the faculty. Whereas often teachers are recognized only as part of a supporting cast (Spillane, 2006), principals must allow those teachers to step to the forefront in decision-making or process-forming activities when their talents lend best to the situation.

Though many leadership roles exist within a school, there are a number of qualities that leaders have in common. Many of these qualities are seen in effective teachers, such as organization, honesty, empathy, resourcefulness, decisiveness, and intelligence. It is for this reason that many teachers and administrators gravitate toward those teachers exhibiting such qualities for guidance, and they themselves tend to seek leadership positions within the school (Gabriel, 2005).

Leadership positions may be either formal or informal, often based on the nature of the role or the availability of staff to effectively contribute without sacrificing their own duties in the classroom. The ways teachers may lead are as varied as the teachers themselves, and should be based on individual strengths. Roles such as instructional or curriculum specialist, mentor, data coach, and change catalyst all lend to the professional training of many faculty members (Harrison, 2007). Each essential to promoting the vision of the school and increasing student achievement, the value of including teachers in these roles is becoming increasingly apparent.

Equally as important as including teachers in serving in formal or informal leadership roles, is the identification and recognition of teachers who are serving as leaders. Whereas teacher leaders who are given formal titles or compensation may enjoy greater recognition for their efforts, often it is the informal leaders who excel at their craft who are over-looked.

According to Danielson (2007), "Informal teacher leaders, in contrast, emerge spontaneously and organically from the teacher ranks. Instead of being

selected, they take the initiative to address a problem or institute a new program. They have no positional authority; their influence stems from the respect they command from their colleagues through their expertise and practice" (p.16).

Teachers may serve in the most critical leadership roles without ever viewing themselves as a leader. Mentoring other teachers, sharing of instructional techniques and strategies with colleagues, and a professional approach each day to the position are a few examples of how a teacher may contribute to the effectiveness of their school operation. Focusing of the formal roles and structures that are put in place for leadership typically allows day-to-day practice to fall through the cracks (Spillane, 2006, p.6). When a distributed approach is embraced, teachers and principals recognize leadership as a practice, wherein each has the opportunity to lead based on the situation and need.

"Whereas principals *can* shape teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, other teachers *do* shape them" (Donaldson, 2007, p.29). The concept of sharing with others who are also viewed to be "in the trenches" creates a level of authenticity for teachers that those not currently practicing within the classroom cannot always provide. Although school districts often spend thousands of dollars each year on professional development provided by outside consultants, they often miss out on useful and relevant training that truly benefits their teachers. Administrators are often negligent in recognizing the power of utilizing the professional experience and expertise in their own district by incorporating their

own faculty into presenting best practices and instructional strategies that will benefit their student population.

In fact, the ultimate success or failure of a principal's agenda often depends on its acceptance by the social networks that exist within the faculty (Reason & Reason, 2007). Whether by design or simply by the nature of the beast, teachers become leaders by their willingness to "buy in" or value any initiative designed to benefit the school.

Administrators have a much shorter tenure on average within a building than most teachers. Often teachers spend decades working with one another; therefore, they hold an institutional memory that allows them to serve as custodians of school culture. Holding a long range viewpoint of goals and investments, the experience of veteran teachers should be sought-after and valued by administrators (Danielson, 2007).

Schools in which teachers have more control over key school-wide and classroom decisions have fewer problems with student misbehavior, show more collegiality and cooperation among teachers and administrators, have a more committed and engaged teaching staff, and do a better job of retaining their teachers (Ingersoll, 2007). Involving teachers in major decision-making processes will ultimately pay many dividends toward bettering the performance of the school. While principals and administrators may assume ultimate responsibility, both they and their teachers share in the successes and failures of students. Teachers may take greater pride in successes generated by their own

ingenuity and have a more invested approach to the ultimate results of a long-range initiative.

School administrators often strive to promote an atmosphere of sharing and collegiality. Recognizing that they cannot possibly have expertise in every subject area or teaching method, many administrators count on their staff to work with one another to develop best practices for instruction. Often teachers take on this practice on their own, recognizing their collective success depends on the ability to collaborate. Teachers may freely do so without permission from their principal, and recognize the need to problem-solve together as professionals (Reason & Reason, 2007). "Facilitator" or "Collaborator" is an informal leadership role that is not always recognized as critical; however, this is a basic practice that effective school districts utilize to increase performance.

While the need for teachers to take on leadership roles within their school districts appears evident, several obstacles often exist that prevent this from occurring whether in a formal or informal setting. Although teacher service in leadership roles demonstrates a benefit to the students and to the districts at large, local teacher unions often frown upon practices that do not compensate teachers for their efforts outside of traditional classroom duties. Budget restraints, however, often prevent principals from financially compensating those who go above and beyond to serve on committees or take on leadership roles such as department head or mentor. In addition, the school day does not always permit common planning or opportunity for group data analysis or discussion. Thus,

without incentives or time set aside to permit collaboration, teacher leadership often will not emerge on its own.

Teacher groups also present obstacles to leadership within their own ranks. Often teacher leaders emerge from the "second stage" of their career, which is viewed as occurring between the fourth and tenth years of teaching experience (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Having learned from their own experience as well as that of others, they are eager to share what they have learned. Such younger teachers, however, often draw criticism from veteran teachers, and refrain from volunteering for leadership roles until they are drafted or coerced by their principal (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Feelings of being undervalued or slighted sometimes are present in those who are not chosen as leaders, creating jealousy and envy among staff. Such risks exist to having a negative impact on school climate, and must be approached delicately at times by principals in order to maintain a positive working environment.

In order to help facilitate a distributed approach to teacher leadership within their districts, some school districts have solicited the help of outside consultants or agencies. One such example that is recognized in this study is the Western Pennsylvania Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). Formed in affiliation with the University of Pittsburgh, this agency has collaborated with 18 school districts (at the time of publication) in western Pennsylvania, helping teachers and administrators to create a collaborative atmosphere in their practice and a distributed approach to leadership (University of Pittsburgh, 2009). Participating districts are assigned a Colleague in Residence (CIR), typically a

retired superintendent, to help provide an additional perspective from an outside point of view and to serve as a facilitator of shared vision and decision-making between teacher and administrator groups. Core groups of teachers are assembled within a school district to identify the strengths of their districts, to establish areas of need, and to explain how the problems may be solved collectively. As districts have evolved in their experience with ELI, opportunities to share and interact with other ELI districts are available to expand the knowledge base and to help one another progress toward success in distributive practice.

A radical transformation toward teacher leadership is not an option; it is a necessity (Reeves, 2008). The research shows a direct relationship between the quality of teacher effectiveness and student learning (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002); thus, it is logical that such a transformation take place. "By inviting expert teachers to assist in improving learning conditions throughout the school, we aren't removing our best teachers from the classroom. We are extending their reach" (Scherer, 2007).

Many teachers do not seek formal leadership roles, such as becoming building principals, because they do not wish to leave the classroom setting. Creating opportunities for teachers or allowing opportunities to emerge from within the teaching ranks itself, to participate in formal or informal decision-making processes that allow them continue to function in a classroom setting yields a dual positive. While teachers are still able to fulfill their sense of purpose

with direct interaction with students, administrators gain their expertise and experience to facilitate initiatives that will drive student instruction.

Schools "need a new concept of teacher professionalism that integrates moral purpose and change agentry, one that works simultaneously on individual and institutional development" (Fullan, 1993). In order to utilize the full potential of the teaching staff, the ability to tap into their fundamental desire to help students achieve is critical. To fully reap the benefits of teacher leadership, school administrators must provide formal support structures and build leadership roles into the structure of the school (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). The opportunity for teachers to express their ideals through collaboration with colleagues and administration can renew interest in their profession and invigorate a school district with a shared vision.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of teacher leadership in public schools through the eyes of both teachers and administrators. Though it may be argued that all teachers function as leaders to some degree, there are varying levels to which the knowledge and talents of the teaching staff are utilized to help form and sustain the vision of a school or school district. As the concept of teacher leadership evolves within a district, administrators, along with veteran teachers, can help less experienced teachers refine their belief systems and enhance their potential to become part of a collaborative learning community (Phelps, 2008). If this potential is to be recognized, however, it is essential that administrators and teachers share a

common understanding of how teachers may be empowered in their buildings and what roles they may play. A disconnect between perceived collaboration and professional trust between administrators and teachers can doom any efforts to achieve a shared vision, resulting in the misuse or neglect of teacher leadership potential.

This study examines teacher leadership in an effort to provide an indicator of how the professional teaching staff functions with administration as a unit devoted to a common vision. A comparative case study approach utilizing teacher and administrator personal interviews identifies how teachers perceive the degree of empowerment and involvement teachers have in the operation of their respective districts, including their input in decision-making processes.

The two districts selected for participation in the study have similar characteristics with regard to demographics and location, and both actively participate in a formal teacher leadership initiative using an outside agency for consultation, namely the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). Comparisons are made to perceptions of administrators as they respond to the same questions regarding teacher leadership both within each school system and between the two separate districts, inquiring into the level of alignment between two groups and the existence of a distributed approach.

The traits that an individual teacher must possess in order to be considered a candidate for leadership within a school setting, whether by their peers or a supervisor, may be varied, yet should be appropriate to those serving in specified roles. Teacher leaders may lead by example, relate well to others,

work collaboratively, or excel in problem solving (Martin, 2007). The characteristics of teacher leaders may vary depending on the situation at hand and the roles they may fill. Examination of those characteristics deemed to be most vital for teachers to assume leadership roles plays an important role in better facilitating the creation of leadership opportunities, and thus will be a topic of investigation within the study.

The roles that teachers may fill within the school setting are varied and are often created by necessity. Whether spawned by an administrative initiative or generated by the professional teaching staff themselves, leadership within the school setting takes several forms. The investigative methods of the study identify how it is believed that teacher leadership may be used to better enhance the school environment and affect student learning.

Additionally, it is recognized that if pathways to teacher leadership opportunities are to be established, the obstacles that prevent those from traversing them must be identified. By seeking to find obstacles to teacher leadership as perceived by currently practicing teachers or administrators, steps may be taken to resolve those issues that may prevent the potential of staff to be realized.

Statement of the Problem

The standards movement swept over our nation in a short period of time, changing the face of education in each of our 50 states (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005). By placing a measured standard of accountability on schools and classrooms, teachers and administrators alike not only endure the self-imposed

pressures of providing the best educational experience possible for their students, but also must meet the now quantifiable demands of reaching Adequate Yearly Progress. Adequate Yearly Progress, also known as AYP, is a title received by all school districts who meet the federally mandated criteria for acceptable school performance in categories such as attendance, graduation rate, student participation in annual state assessment for reading and mathematics, and performance on those assessments. Achievement in each of those areas is based not only on the student population as a whole, but also within subgroups based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, and special education identification. School administrators are faced with ever greater motivation to make use of every available resource to improve student achievement, pressing onward toward the ultimate goal of 100% proficiency in reading and mathematics as measured on standardized assessments.

While a single individual effort from the building principal can have a tremendous positive effect on school achievement and reform, there is limited research to support that lasting results can be achieved solely by individual will or personality. Reform efforts must combine the efforts of both principals and teachers to truly take effect (Marzano, 2003).

Teaching staffs typically possess a high level of expertise in their field of study or specialization. With each year of classroom experience, the interaction with students with varied learning ability and style increase their effectiveness in modifying the delivery of instruction necessary for students to succeed. The combined experience of a building's teaching staff dwarfs those of a single

administrator, regardless of the accolades they may have reached. The basic

recognition that "none of us is as smart as all of us" is a widely accepted truth.

The challenge for the principal is to harness that wealth of expertise and

experience and to channel it into a forum where teachers may best serve the

interests of the school.

The problem that is faced in our schools is that there is a clear need for

teachers to be utilized to their maximum capacity as leaders both in and out of

the classroom in order to benefit student learning. Administrators often recognize

that they have neither the expertise nor availability of time to create and promote

the vision of their school on their own. Many teachers desire to play a role or

have greater input on how business is done in their school, and at minimum wish

to be respected for their expertise and successes in their individual classrooms.

However, disconnect often exists when attempting to establish collaborative

learning communities within schools that empower teachers and utilize their

abilities to emerge as leaders. In order for schools to best reach their potential in

increasing student performance, administrators and teachers must achieve

common understanding of teacher leadership.

Research Questions

The over-arching research question addressed within this study is the

following:

> How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions of
>
> teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice as it exists in
>
> their schools?

In order to provide a closer and more specified examination of teacher leadership perceptions, the following sub-questions are also addressed and supported using the Stages of Concern (Hall & Hord, 1987) framework introduced in the Theoretical Framework section of this chapter and further described in the Review of Relevant Literature and Methodology chapters:

1) How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the types of leadership roles that teachers should fill within their setting?

2) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of how teacher leadership is supported?

3) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of the obstacles that exist to teacher leadership?

4) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the identification of teacher leaders?

Conceptual Framework

The Distributed Leadership model of Spillane is used to help frame the practice of shared leadership and incorporating multiple stakeholders in the leadership practices of a school building. He notes that while often it is only one or two central figures who receive credit within a school setting, it is the teachers who are in the trenches, and often not attributed as being key players in leadership roles (Spillane, 2006). The framework of distributed leadership seeks to take the focus from the formal leader and to place it onto leadership *practice*. There is no simple blueprint that an organization follows, or any sequence of

steps that will ultimately produce the goal. Rather, distributed leadership is part of a school's culture, and how that leadership takes place may be experienced differently by individuals in that organization based on the strengths of a particular individual or simply the situation itself.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used to model the interview protocol and shape the analysis of participant responses for this study is the concept of Concerns Theory and, more specifically, the Stages of Concern as developed by Gene Hall and Shirley Hord in their book <u>Change in Schools: Facilitating the Process</u> (1987). Though much of the discussion in this book is in reference to principals, the authors recognize that their emphasis is "equally applicable to others concerned about and interested in becoming more successful change facilitators" (Hall & Hord, 1987, p.2). Among those others noted are department chairpersons, lead teacher, and grade level chairpersons at the school level. Clearly, their approach is applicable to teachers in leadership roles, and can further be generalized to teachers who hold a variety of leadership roles within their building. Additionally, their research translates to the many new roles aside from those traditionally held from the time of their publication.

Hall and Hord (1987, p. 5) note that in order for schools to improve, teachers must change. Whether the change is initiated and led by a building administrator, colleague, or other individual, it is imperative that the change facilitator understand the practices of teachers and their concerns about changing. When gauging the level of concern a teacher has regarding a

particular innovation occurring within the school setting, there are seven stages into which Hall and Hord (1987) contend teacher concerns about change may fall into. These stages are as follows: Awareness, Informational, Personal, Management, Consequence, Collaboration, and Refocusing. Each of these stages may be grouped or categorized under the clusters of concerns (unrelated, self, task, and impact) that Frances Fuller developed and verified in research. The stages and clusters listed in this section will be further discussed in the review of relevant literature contained in Chapter Two of this document.

Teacher leadership and the recruitment of teachers to serve in leadership or decision-making roles is a practice that has come to forefront in recent years, differing from what many consider to be a traditional model of how schools and educational organizations are managed. For this reason the phenomenon of teacher leadership as it occurs within schools will elicit a number of experiences and emotions which must be considered and understood for the practice to become successful. The concept of concerns is one that is relative to one's frame of reference, giving it the flexibility to be applied to how the implementation of teacher leadership is perceived (Hall & Hord, 1987).

Significance of the Study

The study of teacher leadership has an impact for schools at all levels and in all locations. While each district takes a unique approach to establishing an effective professional environment that best meets the needs of its staff or community, the primary focus is one that is shared across all settings: student performance. The schools that will best increase student performance relative to

their settings are those that maximize the use of their available resources. One of the largest monetary investments that a district will make is in the hiring of a professional staff member. In what may be become a multi-million dollar investment between salary, benefits, and professional development, it is foolish to consider not maximizing the exceptional talents and abilities of the individual.

Schools face a difficult challenge when trying to establish a learning community that seeks and values the input of all stakeholders. When establishing policy, procedure, and the day-to-day organization of the school day, teachers and administrators must be able to work cooperatively and collaboratively. Top-down administration often results in teaching staff that feels undervalued and disconnected from the vision of the school. In an era where teachers are held to high levels of accountability due to No Child Left Behind and high-stakes testing, it is necessary that their input is valued. In a profession so great with responsibility, it is only logical to afford a greater level of power in decision-making (Ingersoll, 2007).

The primary goal of this study is to provide insight as to how teachers and building administrators view teacher leadership. All schools and school districts have their own ideas on how to best use the outstanding qualities of their teaching staff. The degree of utilization of teachers in leadership roles varies from school to school. In the reality of the school environment, however, several challenges exist to utilizing teachers as leaders. While administrators may seek the input of staff before making decisions, some teachers still believe their voice is not heard. Issues regarding what duties are deserving of additional

compensation may exist, as well as to what compensation is acceptable.

Questions regarding how teachers are selected to fill leadership roles arise, and

some feel slighted in the process. Whatever the stumbling blocks may be, they

exist in each district relative to their own circumstance.

Identifying and examining teacher leadership from the perspective of both

teachers and administrators creates a foundational reality upon which more

conversations actions occur to help ease its facilitation. The use of Stages of

Concern presents a unique way to frame teacher perceptions about how teacher

leadership may exist within their schools. The application of these stages for

coding participant responses seeks to get at the root of both teacher and

administrator feelings regarding how teacher leadership is practiced. Knowledge

of not only *if* concerns exist, but also *at what stage or level* those concerns are

occurring, may help districts to take a more proactive approach to setting up

teacher leaders for success and establishing distributed leadership as a practice.

When implementing change, it is less about innovation and more about

innovativeness (Fullan, 2001). Districts must not simply implement change for its

own sake, but rather establish a culture and atmosphere that promotes creative

thinking and collaborative practice to best meet the needs of students.

Strategizing in order to create change in the school setting, or to improve a

change foundation that has already been established, can only be properly done

with the knowledge of what exists at present, whether in practice or attitude. By

understanding where similarity and disconnect may occur, teachers and

administrators may better work to overcome the challenges that may prevent them from achieving the collaborative environment they desire.

Definition of Terms

Building administrators – This group may include, but is not limited to, principals or vice (assistant) principals. Building administrators are responsible for the day-to-day educational and managerial responsibilities within a school building, but are not part of the bargaining unit for teaching or non-professional staff. Administrators such as superintendents, directors of curriculum, or any other position that spans over the entire school district are not included for use of this study.

Concerns – The 1979 work of Hall, George, and Rutherford described concerns as the composite representation of the feelings, preoccupation, thought, and consideration given to a particular issue or task (as cited in Hall & Hord, 1987).

Concerns Theory - This field of study seeks to distinguish between the types of concerns that an individual may have in relation to an innovation or situation. Research in this area has shown that concerns change over time in a fairly predictable, developmental manner. The concept suggests that if the concerns of individuals and how they change can be predicted, advance intervention activities may be designed to help alleviate or address these concerns in order to better facilitate change within an organization (Hall & Hord, 1987).

Distributed Leadership – A distributed perspective of leadership as it relates to the school setting recognizes that managing a school involves more than one

person. Likewise, leadership and management work involves more than those individuals in formal roles are able to do. Distributed leadership "shifts the focus from school principals and other formal or informal leaders to the web of leaders, followers, and their situations that gives form to leadership practice" (Spillane, 2007, p.7).

Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) – Originally founded and affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh, this organization seeks to provide comprehensive, integrated professional development that will support school culture through shared leadership. Employing former school district superintendents to act as "colleagues-in-residence" to work in cooperation with participating districts, the philosophy is using vertical leadership teams (teachers, principals, central office, and superintendent) to focus on instructional improvement through open communication and planning (University of Pittsburgh, 2009).

Formal Teacher Leaders – The definition used for formal leaders is taken from Danielson's (2007, p.16) description of teacher leader roles. "Formal teacher leaders fill such roles as department chair, master teacher, or instructional coach. These individuals typically apply for their positions and are chosen through a selection process. Ideally, they also receive training for their new responsibilities."

Informal Teacher Leaders – According to Charlotte Danielson, informal teacher leaders "emerge spontaneously and organically from the teacher ranks. Instead of being selected, they take the initiative to address a problem or institute a new

program. They have no positional authority; their influence stems from the respect they command from their colleagues through expertise and practice" (Danielson, 2007, p.16).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – In 2001 the federal government reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as No Child Left Behind. This legislation required states to hold schools and school districts accountable for student performance through standardized testing in reading and mathematics. Schools that do not meet benchmarks for student proficiency as set for by this legislation are subject to further requirements or corrective actions.

Teacher Leaders – The concept of teacher leadership is one that constantly evolves and transforms due to the ever-changing needs of our students and schools. For the purpose of this study, teacher leaders are defined as teachers who "lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p.5).

Limitations

A limitation of the study is the use of a sample that is contained to a specific geographic location. The sample will contain two school districts located in the western region of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Not only do these districts share common cultural characteristics due to proximity, but they also access many of the same professional development opportunities for both teaching staff and administrators. It is thus expected for those professionals to share common understandings of professional practice and interact with one

another on a semi-regular basis that can influence one another's views. Additionally, the use of this sample is not designed to be accurate when generalizing the perceptions of teacher leadership as they exist within the state or nation as a whole.

A second limitation to the study is the use of teacher and administrator interviews to obtain data on perceptions of teacher leadership. This method of data acquisition provides an in-depth perspective from only a relatively small number of individuals. Though selected using means appropriate to the study, generalization of responses to the group may not indicate the beliefs of all members of the school districts sampled.

Most qualitative researchers consider it possible to generalize their results based on the randomization of their sample and the application of statistical techniques (Niaz, 2007, p. 430). In this study, however, a purposeful sample will be employed, and the participating districts have a common factor of influence due to their affiliation with the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) and the formal facilitation of teacher leadership practice. While this common thread of being part of their district "core team" for ELI exists, a third limitation of the study may rest in the fact that individuals selected to be part of the interview process were most likely designated as part of that group by their respective principals, and a standard selection process was not utilized from school to school (Angelle & Schmid, 2007).

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the study by highlighting its purpose and significance. The conceptual framework that is used to view teacher leadership and its practice in school systems aligns with James Spillane and his model for distributed leadership. In seeking to explain the phenomenon of teacher leadership as experienced by the participants the theoretical framework of concerns theory, more specifically the seven stages of concern developed and refined by Hall and Hord (1987), is used for the purpose of coding responses obtained through an interview protocol. A review of literature related to this study and the concepts discussed in Chapter One is provided in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Introduction

Due to the enactment of No Child Left Behind 2001 legislation and the pressure to personalize instruction, it has become increasingly evident that public education cannot be viewed as an individual endeavor. Building administrators have neither the time nor the comprehensive expertise necessary to fully drive instruction in the classroom to meet the needs of each student. Classroom teachers provide the experience and the immediate frame of reference that allows the greatest possibility to increase student performance. In order for schools to be successful in meeting the needs of their clients a distributed approach to leadership must be present. This type of approach permits, as well as promotes, teacher leaders to create and support the mission of their school districts.

Other studies have identified roles and characteristics of teacher leaders; yet, they have not thoroughly examined the differing perceptions of teacher leadership between building administrators and teachers. In particular, the application of concerns theory and the framework of Hall & Hord's (1987) Stages of Concern to classify those perceptions brought to light in this study brings a unique insight to the phenomenon of teacher leadership. Identification of the stages of concern to which both teacher and principal responses correspond will help educators and educational practitioners to take appropriate measures to

facilitate distributed practice in their districts and more fully reap the benefits of teacher talents and expertise.

It is apparent that teachers who use their shared experience and expertise to produce and implement initiatives provide great benefits to their students. However, there often exist stumbling blocks when it comes to formalizing or recognizing teacher leaders. Whether from administration or within their own ranks, teacher leaders are sometimes suppressed or even go unnoticed. For these reasons, I proposed to examine the perceptions of teacher leadership held by building administrators and teachers in order to create an understanding of how those views can facilitate an effective framework to drive instructional and decision-making practices within the school setting.

The research method planned for use to gather data was in-depth personal individual interviews, making this a qualitative study. Interview questions were framed to allow participants to provide open-ended responses, allowing the researcher to identify the concerns teachers or administrators display when discussing their own experiences with teacher leadership initiatives. The interview protocol was constructed within the theoretical framework of this study to address the primary research question:

How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions of teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice as it exists in their schools?

Additionally, responses solicited through the interview process were analyzed in order to respond to the following sub-questions:

1) How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the types of leadership roles that teachers should fill within their setting?

2) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of how teacher leadership is supported?

3) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of the obstacles that exist to teacher leadership?

4) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the identification of teacher leaders?

The Need for Schools to Change

In 2001 the federal government legislation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) changed public education as never before. Seeking greater accountability for schools, the intent of this legislation was to close the achievement gap among students and to ensure that all students, even those who are disadvantaged, meet standards of proficiency (United States Department of Education, 2004).

School districts receive annual report cards produced by their respective state departments of education indicating various factors that relate to their effectiveness in reaching this end. Perhaps the most challenging criteria, and the one that has drawn a great deal of concern from public school educators, is student performance on state produced high-level testing in the areas of reading and mathematics. Each state has been charged with developing an assessment or exam that has been validated and approved by the federal government that will allow students to demonstrate proficiency in reading and mathematics. NCLB

outlines a progressive scale of proficiency levels that schools must reach on these exams. Based on the percentage of students who score at either the proficient or advanced level on these tests, the scale began in 2002 with a minimum standard of 45% proficiency in Reading and 35% proficiency in Mathematics. The expectation is that all schools will be at 100% proficiency by the year 2014 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2010).

Within a calculation of school proficiency levels, subgroups are identified that must also must meet each year's designated percentage of proficiency. Subgroups are based on ethnicity, students with Individualized Education Plans, English Language Learners, students who qualify for Title I federal funding, and students who are economically disadvantaged. It is possible for a school to meet the proficiency standard as a whole, but not in one of the subgroups. In this case a school will not be designated as making Adequately Yearly Progress, and become subject to warning or school improvement status. Continued shortcomings will eventually lead to the state department of education imposing its will on schools in order to take corrective action.

A difficulty and criticism of NCLB and its implementation is the lack of consistency between how students are assessed from state to state. While all states who accept federal funding for education are subject to this legislation, they each develop their own assessments that will measure student progress as approved by the federal government. One state may have exceedingly challenging standards and tests, while another has lesser standards; giving the impression that NCLB is "working" in one state but less effective in another

(Popham, 2006). The recent development of Common Core Standards in reading and mathematics as adopted by several states across the nation has sought to remedy this concern and to bring consistency in expectations for schools and students.

Under this now public and detailed method for assessing school effectiveness, the need to personalize instruction for all students has taken on a greater and more urgent position in schools. No longer able to only assess student performance locally, schools scramble to align instruction to state, or now national, standards to prepare students for success for their spring tests. This emphasis has caused a surge in the need for teachers to obtain and analyze data, using every bit available to differentiate instruction to meet student needs. Providing truly individualized instruction is often an overwhelming and time-consuming task, and teachers and administrators have experienced an even greater crunch for time and creativity in developing best practices for instruction.

Despite the heightened level of tension and concern that NCLB has brought to the American education system, our students continually appear to be out-performed by those in other countries (Friedman, 2007). Evidenced by the growing number of outsourced jobs and an infusion of workers from other nations within our own boundaries, it is clear that educators are not merely preparing our youth to compete for jobs with other American students, but rather to compete in a now global environment that has "upped the ante" with regards to career preparation.

Compared to other countries, the United States is not educating or drawing the interest of enough students in advanced math, science, and engineering (Friedman, 2007). Whether a product of our society or of the educational system in the United States at large, American students in general do not match the thirst or regard for education in the way the developing countries such as China or India possess. Whereas Friedman refers to the existence of "Dirty Little Secrets" in the achievement gaps between the United States and its global competitors, it has become increasingly evident that schools are confronted with the challenge of motivating and guiding students to once again become leaders in innovation.

It has been said that we are preparing students in today's schools for jobs that do not yet exist (Barlow, 2008). However, we do know that the ability to communicate effectively and to perform mathematically-related functions are skills our students must possess in order to succeed. Schools must be designed to accommodate these needs, and if they are not currently effective on a great enough scale, reform must occur. The leaders of this reform must be those who have a detailed and hands-on experience working with students and knowledge of best practice for instruction. While industry and education officials may set the path for what needs to be taught, teachers must play an intricate role in planning how to sequence and deliver the curriculum.

The present educational hierarchy often limits the ability of teachers to take on the primary role in planning instruction. While schools are pressured from federal mandates and global competition to engage in continuous renewal and

change to meet our students' needs, the system as it treats teachers does not facilitate a proper means for that change to occur. A new system of training teachers and promoting professionalism to permit change agentry is necessary (Fullan, 1993).

Fullan (1993) contends that teachers must become change agents not only due to their professional knowledge, but also because of the belief that teaching is a moral profession. "Moral purpose keeps teachers close to the needs of children and youth; change agentry causes them to develop better strategies for accomplishing their moral goals" (Fullan, 1993, p.12). The fact that teachers are likely to have entered the profession due to their sense of purpose and passion for the achievement of their students generates a greater intensity toward success. No individual has a greater investment in the success of students in a classroom than the teacher themselves. To harness that sense of investment and purpose is only logical in the decision-making process.

Though the need for change is evident, schools must take caution to not over extend. "The goal is not to innovate the most" (Fullan, 2001, p.35), meaning that a district that can place the most new initiatives on the table is not necessarily the most effective. Districts often become so caught up in their desire for change that they overwhelm their staff and structure with new ideas and trendy initiatives simply to display the fact they are on the cutting edge or ahead of the times. While the need for wide-scale reform may be evident, one can only do so much in a limited amount of time and with a limited amount of resources. Fullan (2001) refers to "Christmas tree" schools – those who glitter from a

distance, yet end up only superficially adorned and producing no real depth or quality to their programs. Patience, focus, and appropriate planning are critical elements for any initiative to succeed.

"Moral purpose without change agentry is martyrdom; change agentry without moral purpose is change for the sake of change" (Fullan, 1993, p.14). For schools to truly progress, change must occur with the best interest of students first at mind. Though statistics and legislation may draw fear in the hearts of many, and certainly must be valued for all of the right reasons, reform agendas must not lose sight of the unique individual needs of the students or community that it affects.

Distributed Leadership

It is unrealistic to hold the view that a principal can know everything about an organization as complex as a school (Spillane, 2006). Still, many turn to the principal as the one individual who will lead a building, regardless of the situation. Curriculum, discipline, and instructional delivery are all concerns that face a principal on a daily basis, to name a few. Impossible to effectively meet the needs of all the stakeholders on any given day, the principal's need for help is apparent.

The distributed model of leadership as presented by Spillane lends itself well to the school setting, and provides a primary framework for the research presented in this study. Spillane notes that school success stories often promote one or two central figures, such as the building principal, as the main character who receives primary credit. The teachers and other school personnel are in the

trenches, driving initiatives and following the lead of the main character. While

teachers are recognized for their efforts, they are not attributed as being key

players in leadership roles (Spillane, 2006).

A truly distributed model does not merely hold this "leader-plus" format where

there is a focus on one individual who is supported by the offerings of others. In

addition to recognizing that more than one person must take on a leadership role

for an organization to be successful, there must also be a practice of leadership

that exists within its culture. A distributed model is not a "Holy Grail" method or a

blueprint where schools must simply follow a prescribed recipe for success

(Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Rather, schools that follow a distributed model are

prepared to adapt to all situations because they foster a culture that allows

persons to apply leadership qualities of individuals as they match individual

strengths and areas of expertise.

Spillane's distributed leadership perspective removes the focus from the

leader and places it on to leadership practice. Designing such a practice and

implementing a distributed perspective that can function on a daily basis is based

on three principles stated by Spillane (2006, p. 93):

> "Principle One: The *practice* of leadership should be a central focus in
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> efforts to improve school leadership because it is a more proximal cause
>
> of leadership roles, processes, or structures.
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> Principle Two: Intervening to improve leadership necessitates attention to
>
> *interactions*, not just actions, because leadership practice takes shape in
>
> the interactions among leaders and followers.

Principle Three: Intervening to improve leadership practice requires

attention to the design and redesign of aspects of the *situation*, such as

routines and tools, because the situation helps define leadership practice."

The first principle noted by Spillane reinforces the fact that it is not through a

particular title or role that leadership may be achieved. Reliance on the

leadership of one individual within a school system is not a viable option when

seeking to improve the leadership capacity of the organization necessary for

sustained improvement (Williams, 2009). Demands placed on school leaders are

continually expanding; thus, it has become more important for individuals to lead

based on their strengths (Kise & Russell, 2009). Recognizing the necessity for a

particular characteristic or talent within a person or group of persons relative to

the situation at hand will drive the roles that need to be filled, as well as what

processes may need to be established to get the job done. While in the past a

more rigid or "black and white" approach may have been taken, a distributed

approach allows new solutions to be presented due to availability of a wider

selection of human resources.

It is the situation, as noted in the third principle by Spillane, that

determines what leadership practice should be utilized to get the job done.

Though a written policy or practice may be available to guide how to approach a

task, they may often be insufficient (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

Carrying out leadership tasks is not simply a function of individual skill, and

cannot always effectively be accomplished by the same individual who holds a

formal title. The enactment of such tasks often must be stretched out over

various individuals or groups of people who possess the necessary traits to best get the job done.

Roles of individuals who take part in a distributed approach to leadership often are based on their individual strengths. Those strengths may be inherent in nature and may positively correlate to their personality and interests. When involved in situations that match leaders' likes, they are more likely to perform at their best (Kise & Russell, 2009). Once members of a leadership or administrative team understand the personality types of their colleagues or staff, they don't expect a given individual to be effective in every situation. When approaching the situation at hand, they are then more likely to be selective in the roles people play to get the best results.

The stakeholders within a school system who may take part in a distributed approach are not limited to administrators or faculty. In fact, when truly incorporating a distributed practice, the door is open for many to step up to the plate to solve problems or accomplish goals when it meets their relative area of expertise. An interesting case study by Maxwell, Scheurich, & Skrla (2009) documents the role of a custodian in a rural school district and his contribution to bettering the practice of their school system. Although many administrators receive the sound advice to know their secretaries and custodians, since it is they who run the schools, these individuals are not often thought of as being part of the leadership element. Increasingly, however, in a school that believes in a distributed practice, these individuals may shine in a given situation or role.

Without being in the limelight, their input may drive the approach or direction the school may take to improve efficient production.

Earlier work by Spillane was framed by a research initiative entitled the Distributed Leadership Study. As part of this research, the ways by which leadership may be stretched over the practice of leaders was described in three ways – collaborated distribution, collective distribution, and coordinated distribution (Spillane, 2004). In collaborated distribution, leaders work together to accomplish a function such that the practice of one leader becomes the basis for another's practice and vice versa, thus creating a reciprocal interdependency. For example, this may be simply characterized in a principal-assistant principal partnership. Though in many districts the assistant may simply function independently from the principal and delegated to perform all of the student disciplinary duties or less-desirable tasks, the team at Apollo-Ridge High School in Pennsylvania, for an example, works in concert to accomplish many tasks. When preparing a proficiency plan for the school year, the assistant uses his data analysis and organizational skills to prepare reports on student achievement data while the principal uses his knowledge of pedagogy and communication skills to deliver the vision of classroom practice and expectations to the staff.

Collective distribution is the practice where two or more leaders may work separately but interdependently, seeking to achieve a shared goal that produces a common practice. An example in this case may involve data coaches within a school system. Though they may work with different grade levels or groups of teachers, their practicing of common tasks or processes to break down, analyze,

and interpret data yield a form of division of labor. Multiple leaders using their strengths to attack a problem in smaller clusters, only to collectively group the results to paint a picture of student achievement over the entire school falls within the realm of a distributed approach and takes the load off one individual.

Coordinated distribution describes a practice where different leadership tasks are performed in a specific sequence in order to execute a particular function. Spillane and Diamond (2007) use the example of gathering data to be used for analysis and the ultimate goal of driving instruction to improve student performance. In order to generate such data in a school system, (for example mandated annual proficiency exams used to meet NCLB requirements as described earlier in this chapter) many individuals must be counted on to do their part. A technology director or technician who ensures student identification or reporting data is correct to track student responses, principals or guidance counselors who devise testing schedules for their buildings, and administrators who interact with testing agencies and the department of education to receive testing reports and to ensure their accuracy all take part in the process before data can be rolled out to teachers for their use in providing effective and targeted lessons.

Regardless of the label of the practice or the individuals involved, a key element that will permit a distributed practice to prevail in a school building or district is that of trust. For those with the "titles" or upper-end of the organizational chart to give up some of their power or responsibility, they have to believe that those to whom they are surrendering control are fully capable of getting the job

done. When trust is strong, leaders are able to facilitate work that is more meaningful and take risks to embark upon greater challenges. Bureaucratic control becomes less necessary as others are given autonomy to achieve tasks set before them in a manner that suits the situation and their abilities. Also, when trust is established, the lines of collaboration have a greater existence and a more open flow of ideas and honest feedback will be present (Smylie, Mayrowetz, Muphy, & Louis, 2007).

In order for shared leadership to become practice within a school district, a mutual understanding must exist that teachers possess the capabilities to act as leaders. Principals must set the tone regarding expectations for teacher roles and contributions with respect to leadership, and effectively establish a climate that permits a reciprocated effort from the teaching staff. Equally important as the efforts of the principal, the efforts of the teaching staff must work toward a relationship with administration that is conducive to operating as a community of leaders.

In a school where a distributed leadership perspective is established, the challenge then becomes how to appropriately distribute leadership responsibilities. Who participates in various routines, the extent to which they participate, and how the situation defines leadership practice are the details a school district must face when utilizing the leadership potential of teachers. A key to effective collaboration, the distributed model propels schools forward and positively impacts the quality of teaching and learning (Lucia, 2004).

While constructing his framework regarding distributed leadership, Spillane makes an important note in recognizing that several leadership initiatives try to teach or instill certain tools in individuals that will cause them to become leaders. Leadership training programs, including principal training programs, seek to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to become an effective leader (Spillane, 2006). Effective school leaders will not only seek those skills within themselves, but also within their colleagues or staff members. Learning to establish a leadership practice within a building thus becomes more critical then transforming one or two individuals into leaders.

Wagner and Kegan (2006) view the ability to invest expertise in creating opportunities for shared knowledge as the new type of leader that schools must encourage. Sustained improvement will be realized not when one individual is viewed as the only source of knowledge, but when teams are able to work collectively to achieve the school improvement toward which they strive. The banding together of professional educators must not serve the purpose of increasing the legions of those who follow the will of a charismatic leader, but to take on the challenge of "rebuilding the airplane while flying it." Ridding our schools of the single approach to leadership that is top-down and building on the concept of leader-learners will cause our schools to reach new heights (Wagner & Kegan, 2006).

If there is a criticism of distributed leadership, or at least the research in this regard, it is that it is simply applying a new name to familiar practices. It is wondered if the label of a distributed approach will simply become a "catchall"

phrase used anytime leadership responsibility is shared or delegated to other individuals within a system (Harris, 2005). Spillane himself poses the question whether the distributed perspective does offer a new approach, or "is simply another case of the emperor having no (new) clothes" (Spillane & Diamond, 2007, p.2) Concern among researchers is that most work in this area is writing based on theory, and very little empirical research exists on the topic (Maxwell, Scheurich, & Skrla, 2009).

Distributed Leadership Versus Delegation

It is important to distinguish between a distributed approach to the accomplishment of tasks or goals within a system and the delegation of duties to others. When discussing teacher leadership and distributed models within the framework of this study, the emphasis is on the establishment of a practice where teachers play a role in decision-making, creating a shared vision, and supporting student achievement through collaboration and the capacity to allow teacher leadership to emerge.

When districts employ the use of faculty members to serve in roles that may lessen the burden placed on administrators, but do not enhance culture or student learning, this is not emblematic of a distributed setting. Often roles are merely duties or administrative in nature, for example, assigning lunch duty, in-school suspension coverage, or developing a testing schedule rather than using the instructional expertise of teachers to help improve teaching at the school (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

On a similar note, situations where teachers are assigned or named to roles and responsibilities within the school setting by the whim or authority of the principal alone do not exemplify distributed leadership practice. The hand-picking or drafting of individuals to take on formal leadership roles within a school district can lead to perceptions of favoritism, thus thwarting the progress of establishing an atmosphere where teachers want to step forward on their own (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

Distributed systems promote an atmosphere where leadership opportunities may emerge not only from the "top-down," but also from within the trenches where critical needs may first be observed. Teachers who recognize the need for data to help drive instruction, new resources to help better instructional delivery, or modified procedures to improve classroom management must have the freedom and the forum to work collaboratively with their peers and propose new strategies that will benefit those who are affected. Distributed practice means the principal or building administrator is able to "step-back" from a situation when appropriate and allow those who have a vested interest and enhanced knowledge base to assume the primary role in decision-making (Spillane, 2006).

Related Leadership Theories

The elements presented in the distributed leadership perspective also can be related to situational leadership. In the situational view of leadership, an individual may adapt their leadership behavior based on their willingness and ability to complete or take part in a given task (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty,

2005). Four leadership styles are described to match a high or low level of willingness or the ability of a leader's follower to complete a task with a high or low amount of emphasis on the leader's concern for a personal relationship with the follower.

Although the framework is not identical to that of distributed leadership, the premise that the effective leader can identify the correct approach to use with his followers corresponds with the notion that individuals respond to leadership opportunities at different times in different ways. The acceptance of this notion is critical to the establishment of a leadership practice within school climate. Knowledge of the strengths of one's staff increases the efficiency of the decision-making process within the organization, and places persons in situations where they are set up to succeed.

Servant leadership draws similarities to the themes of distributed leadership as well. By placing the leader at the center of the organization rather than the top of the hierarchy, a principal is then viewed as the individual who is integral in all aspects of school organization. Instead of only delegating or interacting with a few chosen subordinates, such as head teachers or department chairs, the principal may interact with all members of the team, providing support and guidance as necessary (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

The argument can be established that the area of instructional leadership may be applied both to principals and teachers. Though the principal is widely regarded as the instructional leader of a building, the description given by Smith and Andrews (1998), as summarized by Marzano (2005, p.18), clearly depicts

qualities that several members of the teaching staff may possess. The four roles of resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence are leadership traits that are desirable for all members in a culture of leadership, and not just that of the principal.

While the concept of distributed leadership is a premise that will serve as a primary framework for this study, as well as the organizational ideal public schools strive toward, it is an eclectic approach of several leadership theories upon which principals may base their style. As Connelly (2009) states, it is because principals are the chief instructional leaders that they are able to recognize the need for shared leadership, drawing on the talents of all stakeholders as they may help meet the individual needs of students.

The theory that schools will effectively meet the needs of their students through a distributed approach is maintained by the researcher, while the research questions presented in the study point to the need for principals and teachers to have a mutual understanding of one another's perspective to effectively meet that end. How principals and teachers view leadership and its practice within the school organization is the common thread that must bind their efforts toward school improvement.

Rationale for Teacher Leadership

Public opinion and confidence in schools has diminished as expectations for schools rise (Beachum & Dentith, 2004). The era of accountability has greatly enhanced the need for school reform and real change to occur in terms of delivering instruction. However, principals are often so busy with administrative

duties that they lack the time to become change facilitators. Though in the past some may have felt that if principals are not the key to change in their schools they will be missing the mark (Hall, Hord, Rutherford, & Huling, 1984), research has consistently confirmed that a distributed approach is a key that will positively impact the quality of teaching and student performance in schools (Lucia, 2004).

Teachers are on the "front lines" of education and have the greatest impact on student achievement. "It makes no sense to hold people accountable for something they do not control," and "accountability without commensurate power is unfair and can be harmful" (Ingersoll, 2007, p.23). In public education there are few who shun this accountability, and in fact, many embrace having accurate, reliable, and valid standards (Schlafer, 2009). The amount of decision making and degree of control are major criteria that establish a level of professionalism and status in a line of work (Ingersoll, 2007). If teachers are truly regarded as professional masters of their craft, their level of expertise must be permitted to shine and contribute to enhancing school practice and climate.

The school system represents a unique hierarchy that separates them from the business world. "Teachers are not part of management, and they are not the workers. They are in charge and responsible for the workers, their students" (Ingersoll, 2007, p.23). Since teachers are counted upon to get results with their students, the ultimate mission of the school districts, it is vital that they be involved not only in the day-to-day routine, but also the major decision-making processes.

Senge et al. (1999) states "excessive intervention from the top-down diminishes a system's capacity to autonomously respond to complex changes, which are often beyond the control of leaders" (as cited in Freeney, 2009, p. 213). As schools increase their power to accumulate and analyze data down to the individual student, often on a very regular basis, teachers are expected to differentiate and modify instruction to suit individual needs on a lesson-by-lesson basis. The challenge for school leaders is to be able to internalize that data "at the right time for the right reasons for the right students" (Lewis & Caldwell, 2005). Teachers must possess the ability to make instructional decisions based on both quantitative and observed information, reacting to the data set before them to decide on best practices for instructional delivery. Bronson (2007) found that principal and teacher leadership are inseparable with regard to achieving the capacity within schools to allow teachers to function with autonomy. Schools that have high leadership capacity are those that amplify leadership for all (Searby & Shaddix, 2008, p. 1)

"Teachers have a practical perspective of a school that transcends the knowledge of an outside expert" (Hickey & Harris, 2005). They have a knowledge of the needs of the staff and what must be done in order to be successful with their student population and school culture. Hickey and Harris (2005, p. 13) cite Donaldson (2001) as recognizing that teachers have greater expertise in these regards than most persons who have formal authoritative positions, and that nurturing this expertise will benefit the facilitation of leadership in such a way that will benefit student achievement.

Crowther et al. (2002, p.xix) states that "teacher leadership appears to be inseparable from successful school reform as it is currently envisioned" (as cited in Angelle & Schmid, 2007, p. 771). The purpose of school reform must be centered on increasing student achievement. If student achievement is truly at the heart of reform, then its fundamental efforts must occur at the classroom level. Since teachers are the active agent leading the charge with students, it is essential that they play a distinguished role in school leadership.

Characteristics of Teacher Leaders

While the need for teachers to assume leadership roles within the school becomes increasingly evident, the question that often lingers is "How do we recognize a teacher leader?" Though agreement exists among scholars that teacher leadership is essential for school improvement, there is a pronounced lack of agreement on what defines a teacher leader (Angelle & Schmid, 2007, p. 771). Finding the right fit for a particular role is always difficult, and selecting the right person for the job is often critical. Unfortunately, there is no one particular formula for identifying who a leader may be. As in any system, teacher leaders may posses a wide array of abilities of characteristics that allow them to excel or promote the well-being of their school in some regard.

In her book Teacher Leadership That Strengthens Professional Practice, Charlotte Danielson (2006) notes the disposition that many teacher leaders possess. First, she states that teacher leaders maintain a sense of purpose and are focused on the core mission of student learning. This focus is supplemented by personality traits which allow that focus to produce fruits of labor. Optimism,

enthusiasm, confidence, and the willingness to take risks all are named by Danielson as key characteristics that lead to school improvement. The "Let's do it!" attitude that teacher leaders may express can become contagious, and may overtake the sometimes present contrarian point of view. Danielson is quick to note, however, that such enthusiasm should not merely be a matter of "immature exuberance," but rather the energy to see a project through to its fruition.

Along with enthusiasm and energy, Danielson cites the necessity for perseverance and the willingness to work hard. "Immature exuberance" will cause an initiative to lose momentum and potentially fail once the initial excitement wears off, while an effective teacher leader is able to patiently sustain an effort.

Such perseverance must not be misplaced with stubbornness, however. Teacher leaders must possess a level of creativity and flexibility. Quite rarely do projects move along exactly as planned within the school setting. "Teacher leaders don't become trapped by their idea, sticking with it even in the face of evidence that it should be modified" (Danielson, 2006, p. 39). A teacher leader is able to discern when a change in direction may become necessary, evaluating appropriately with data and feedback.

Teachers at different stages of their career often have different approaches to leadership roles and conversations related to educational practice or decision-making. This is often due, quite simply, to the fact that novice teachers differ in their needs from veteran teachers. Novice teachers are typically more open and appreciative for opportunities to learn how to engage their

students, and while initially tentative, are eager to do well and participate in collegial discussion (Lieberman & Miller, 2005). Veteran teachers are equipped with a more developed repertoire of strategies accumulated over time and have more interest in refining what they have done in the past. The combination of these approaches may provide an appropriate blend of sharing and capacity for change that may help a school move forward in its pursuit to better academic performance.

The school environment can be ambiguous, and often decisions are necessary to be made on a momentary basis. In many circumstances the data or complete array of issues cannot be fully known when first embarking on an initiative. Teacher leaders understand the nature of how a school operates and are tolerant of the fact that plans cannot always be made in detail.

As a whole, Danielson views teacher leaders as possessing characteristics that are not exclusive to the field of education. Not to discount the need for professional knowledge or pedagogy, however, the wide array of need for individuals to assume leadership roles requires more than professional "know-how." In fact, Crowther (2009) confirms that teacher leadership efforts have not often sustained their success when those individuals do not have a clear ability in terms of pedagogy. It is an additional element when teacher leaders are able to view the bigger picture and possess the ethical make-up to drive school initiatives.

John Gabriel, in his text How to Thrive as a Teacher Leader (2005), echoes many of the same beliefs as Danielson. Also reaching beyond

professional knowledge, Gabriel notes the admirable personal traits of honesty, fairness, empathy, and acceptance. Martin (2007, p.17) includes traits such as accountability, accessibility, collaborative, decisive, disciplined, ethical, focused, global thinking, involved, perceptive, resourceful, risk-taking, and being a team-player.

Gabriel (2005, p. 15) recognizes the fact that whether by choice or involuntarily, people generally will follow their leaders. When their leader is truly someone to believe in, the loyalty and willingness to follow that lead is enhanced. Additionally, when others feel as though their leader will treat them fairly and strive to do the right thing, even when the answers may not be what they want to hear, they are more willing to overlook shortcomings and respond by going the extra mile to make things work. Teacher leaders can provide empathy for their colleagues because they may very well have been in the same shoes as those they lead. This can provide the authenticity that administrators may not be able to provide and, whether deserving or not, teachers at times feel as though administrators are not "one of them."

Additionally, the characteristics regarding decisiveness, intelligence, and resourcefulness are held in high regard by Gabriel. Responding to the ever-changing environment in the school setting, Gabriel uses the term "forward-thinking" in a similar manner as Danielson described flexibility. The ability to anticipate what will happen next and make the appropriate adjustments is a valuable quality among leaders in any field, and critical in education. The element of control over one's clientele or circumstances precipitates the need for leaders

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who can make decisions with confidence based on as much information as currently available, utilizing all available resources to improve student achievement or school climate.

Crowther (2009) recognizes the ability of teacher leaders to stand out due to their ability to confront the barriers that exist within a school's culture. Though the barriers to teacher leadership will be discussed in a later section of this chapter, it is important to note the value of this characteristic. The culture of authority in the traditional sense has been longstanding within most schools. As the hierarchy exists, teachers rank below administrators and thus are viewed to not have the same level of input. Some teacher leaders have the confidence and understanding to appropriately extend their reach beyond the norm. Though they may be viewed as teaching "against the grain", their conviction, courage, and skill are what is necessary for school reform to occur (Crowther, 2009, p.17).

Not only do some teacher leaders have the conviction to develop and suggest ideas that will transform school culture, they also possess the ability to translate their ideas into sustainable action (Crowther, 2009). They are able to take action and get others on board to ensure the goal is realized. Collaborative learning environments promote school improvement and support student performance (Edlow, 2008). Teacher leaders who can recruit the efforts of others and facilitate a workable environment can make huge strides for their school community.

Roles of Teacher Leaders

Just as the characteristics and abilities that teacher leaders possess are diverse and may differ widely, so too are the roles that teacher leaders may fill within a school system. Whether formal or informal, each has its own merit and importance in how the school functions and ultimately impacts student achievement.

The roles that teacher leaders assume within a school system can be generalized into a framework of four broad categories, as described by John Gabriel:

- Influencing school culture

- Building and maintaining a successful team

- Equipping other potential teacher leaders

- Enhancing or improving student achievement (2005, p. x)

Influencing school culture is perhaps the broadest theme of the four, as one may argue that any role that falls in the other three categories would certainly influence school culture. In fact, several of the roles that teacher leaders assume may fall under more than one of the categories. Just as the role of any teacher is diverse and varied depending on the setting, so too is that of leadership positions.

More simply, Martin (2007, p.17) divides formal teacher leadership roles into two layers: those that are assigned and those who volunteer. A third layer is designated for informal roles that a teacher may assume on a day-to-day basis. Just as Gabriel's distinctions, however, there is overlap involved. Dependent on

the circumstance and school district, the roles mentioned in this section may be either formal or informal. Often, many of these roles may be filled on a rotational basis, or individuals may feel the need to assume leadership if it is a concern that is particularly interesting to them or impacts them directly.

Teacher leaders often informally act as catalysts for change. Not content with the status quo, they are quick to question the present climate and seek the "better way" (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Not simply a contrarian who defies any new ideas, these individuals have a genuine interest in the improvement of the quality of their work, as well as the school as a whole. Their suggestions and considerations, whether given individually, at grade level or faculty meetings, seek to benefit others and stimulate action that will cause the organization to grow.

Those seeking to refine their craft pursue opportunities for professional development and growth. By attending conferences and workshops, teachers may assert leadership capabilities by acquiring information that may not be available through the district's own resources. Understanding the responsibility of sharing this new information with their colleagues, conference attendees then serve as a source of professional development for others by presenting at faculty meetings or during in-service sessions (Gabriel, 2005).

As teachers grow in experience they seek to share their knowledge with others. Writing for professional publications is an outlet that leaders may consider. Publication provides opportunities to network with educators from other

districts or levels of education, and always welcomes good publicity to the school of the author (Gabriel, 2005).

Whether by the pen or oral presentation, teacher leaders who impart their knowledge to others benefit the greater good of education as a whole. On the school, district, or even wider levels, the collective wisdom of teachers grows from those who are willing to share with others (Danielson, 2006).

On a more individual basis, the role of mentor can occur both formally and informally. Formally, new teacher induction programs often designate a specific individual with whom a new teacher may consult or look to for support not only regarding instruction, but also the building procedures and interpersonal relation techniques that teachers require to become successful members of the school community. Mentors may receive monetary compensation for their efforts, and are officially documented as such.

Leaders in a school building may seek to mentor new staff members simply because they feel it is their responsibility to "pass on" to the next generation what they have learned, and have a genuine interest in helping others to succeed. In any regard, serving as a mentor requires a great deal of time and expertise, but provides a great benefit to the individual and educational team as well (Harrison & Killion, 2007).

Teachers may also be assigned formal roles while representing their department or grade level. These individuals may assume several duties, and may or may not be compensated for their efforts. Department or grade level leaders may facilitate meetings among their peers, compile budgets, make

decisions regarding instruction, or represent their area's interests when meeting with administration or parent groups. They also may help implement instruction by monitoring student performance on assessment, using data to construct curriculum maps or strategies to improve achievement (Gabriel, 2005).

Over recent years districts have looked to teachers to formally serve in roles such as curriculum specialist, peer coach, or data coach (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Some teachers may assume these roles on a part-time or full-time basis. Leading others by virtue of their experience and expertise in their respective area, these teachers may be formally designated but do not possess authority equal to that of an administrator, as they may not evaluate their colleagues formally. In order to be successful in such a role, an individual must employ confidence and decisiveness to get their colleagues to respond to their instruction and jump on board with their approach (Danielson, 2006).

While all of the aforementioned roles focus the activities that occur within the school during the work day, teachers may also serve as leaders in the community. Involvement in student activities and community organizations go a long way in providing good public relations for the school. Many community members have only the perception that teachers work seven and a half hours a day and have their summers off (Gabriel, 2005). By attending school events, creating forums and activities for parents and students to attend on evenings and weekends, or even initiating school assignments or activities that reach out to the community, teachers are seen as leaders not only in the school setting, but also in the community at large.

Though they are varied, the roles that teacher leaders play can be capitalized on to bring focus on long-term change. Schools that afford opportunities for teachers to be involved in decision-making and utilize individual strengths are more likely to have classrooms that provide students the same benefit (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

Conditions for Successful Teacher Leadership

Initiatives that are endorsed or created to encourage teacher leadership must be supported by the administrators overseeing the project. "Roles must be introduced deliberately and supported fully," according to Johnson and Donaldson (2007, p. 12-13). "To be viable, these roles must have well-defined qualifications, responsibilities, and selection processes." A stable funding source and proactive approach to supporting and ensuring teacher leadership initiatives are successful are commitments that principals have to be willing to make, as such a commitment will make or break the role of a teacher leader. The anticipation of resistance or contrarian points of view for other teachers in the building can greatly damage the experience of those willing to take on leadership roles, and therefore must be nurtured (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

In addition to providing stability and anticipation of possible detraction, principals must be willing to invest time in helping teachers obtain the skills necessary to develop as a leader. "Helping teachers become leaders requires not only a desire to meet the challenge but also a definite plan" (Phelps, 2008, p.119). The ability to appropriately facilitate a meeting, interpret and analyze data, and so on are learned skills which need direction and support to be

cultivated. Providing opportunities for professional development and the availability of time for mentoring can be a tremendous asset to aspiring leaders, along with a climate where others feel free to take risks without fear of critique. While some principals may feel as though their authority is threatened by a teacher's ambition, it is widely shown that those who are willing to share their power actually gain in authority (Danielson, 2007).

Teachers must understand the meaning of leadership before they can adopt leadership roles (Phelps, 2008). Without understanding how to extend their influence beyond the classroom, teachers may not take advantage of the opportunity to lead even though they may be willing.

Kurtz (2009) recognized teacher leadership occurring as part of a two-way street, where a teacher must possess motivation and initiative and the principal in turn offers support and opportunity (p.14). She cites five ways for teachers to be supported to become successful leaders:

- encouraging teachers to lead and stay informed

- creating leadership roles for teachers

- providing opportunities for to continue learning and be trained as leaders

- easing the constraints of time

- creating more connection opportunities for teachers to communicate with one another

Supports for teacher leadership cannot be a one-time event. As described in the earlier section on distributed leadership, support for teacher leadership

must be part of the practice of the school. Encouragement for teacher leadership must come not only from the building leaders, but also from one another. Time for collaboration and collegial sharing must be incorporated either into the instructional day or become a regular part of practice. Teacher collaboration must be more of the rule rather than the exception, and communication amongst staff a daily practice. For teacher leadership to take root and to truly be successful, it must be embraced not as an event, but as the standard for how the school functions.

Western Pennsylvania Educational Leadership Initiative

The Western Pennsylvania Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) is an organization affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh that serves as resource for school districts for facilitating teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice. Though affiliated with the University and receiving endowments from outside organizations, membership in ELI is a contracted service, initially requiring as much as $10,000 per year for a district to participate. Upon enrollment in ELI, districts form a "core team" of participants, comprised of administrators at both the district and building levels and teachers from all buildings and grade levels. Districts are also assigned a Colleague in Residence (CIR), who is a retired superintendent, university professor, or former educator to help facilitate their growth process, with leadership experience.

It is stressed that ELI is not a program, but rather a way of thinking, as it seeks to build the capacity to address district concerns. Capacity is built through a philosophy of shared leadership and the work of vertical leadership teams.

Though a core team is established at the onset of the initiative and may stay in-tact for the duration of the relationship with ELI, districts may draw on the talents and expertise of any staff members in order to address a particular problem or concern. The focus of ELI is to allow districts to make data-informed decisions and solve problems through open dialogue and planning (University of Pittsburgh, 2009).

In addition to working within schools as individual districts, ELI has sought to establish connections between ELI districts that will allow them to meet and share ideas geared toward the ultimate aim of improving instruction and student achievement. This is done through regional sharing meetings, whether specifically designated for role-alike groups (teachers, administrators, central office, etc.) or from a whole group approach that may then break off into subgroups based on needs or concerns.

The CIR assigned to each district serves as a mentor to members of the ELI team within a district. Their role is to help districts or the individual buildings within to formulate clear goals and visions, and then to implement them through a collaborative manner. CIR's may help develop agendas for ELI related meetings, or even facilitate professional development opportunities or activities relevant to the needs of the district. The emphasis, however, remains consistent with the philosophy of the initiative, in that it is not one individual responsible for the growth or advancement of the group towards its goals, but rather a shared approach to decision-making and leadership that pools the resources and expertise necessary to best get the job done.

Obstacles to Teacher Leadership

"Its amazing that teacher leadership is possible in schools as they are currently structured" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p.81). Many schools in their current format simply are not conducive to incorporating teachers in the decision-making process. The obstacles blocking the path to leadership take on several forms. Some of them are due to schedules and physical constraints; others are the product of relationships and the dynamic of interaction between teachers and administrators.

A primary obstacle may occur at the onset of teacher leadership opportunities simply due to the selection process for formal or even informal roles. When teachers are selected by their principals, favoritism may be perceived and result in teacher resentment, thus discouraging individuals from accepting such roles (Murphy, 2005). This may be particularly discouraging to younger teachers. While many teachers entering the second stage of their careers (4 to 10 years of experience) seek out or are selected for leadership roles, they often say "that their colleagues viewed them as too young or inexperienced" to assume a leadership role (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007, p.11).

When a volunteer approach is utilized for selecting teacher leaders, teachers may also fear resentment from their colleagues for setting themselves apart. Danielson (2007) likens this to the "tall poppy syndrome," where "those who stick their heads up risk being cut down to size" (p. 19). Though they may have great ideas that will truly benefit the school or their students, some view it

best not to rock the boat and risk their colleagues' feeling that they're being outshone.

The presence or utilization of formal leadership roles may play a role in creating the resentment between colleagues discussed by Danielson. Anderson (2004) found that formal leadership roles actually impede teacher leadership from succeeding in schools. Those serving in formal roles may tend to exclude others, and effectively halt the distribution of leadership or decision-making within the school. Individuals functioning in these roles may be viewed as "typical" administrators, and thus perceived to play an administrative role rather than being part of the instructional team sharing the same focus as their colleagues.

Teacher associations as a group can sometimes foster such a climate of resentment for those who seek to extend their reach beyond the classroom. Labor relations can be responsible for a divide between teachers and administration (Murphy, 2005). When contract or labor issues take on a negative tone within a building or district, the effects can ripple through the staff and hinder the establishment of teacher leadership opportunities. "The tension that exists between teacher unions and school district administrators discourages teachers from engaging in roles beyond the classroom" (Killion, 1996, p.75). The attitude of "That's not my job!" can prevail, and colleagues may pressure one another to not become involved in additional initiatives because of feeling that employees or their opinions are not appropriately valued.

The use of collective bargaining agreements and a union presence within school districts may act as a hindrance when trying to incorporate teachers into

the decision-making process. McDonnell and Pascal (1979) stated that while effective principals may work in concert with collective bargaining agreements in order to increase teacher participation in making decisions, less effective principals use the restrictions that accompany the agreement as an excuse for poor management (as cited in Eberts, 2007, p.182). A study by Eberts and Stone using a national survey in fact found that "the gap in perceptions between elementary school teachers and principals about a principal's active leadership is larger in union than in nonunion schools" (as cited in Eberts, 2007, p.182). The same study followed suit when comparing principal and teacher perceptions with regard to how well they work together, as well as finding no difference in perceptions of staff being well-informed or identifying conflict.

Feelings of being under-valued or taken advantage of can be enhanced by the lack of reward or compensation for teachers serving as leaders. Often collective bargaining agreements do not include forms of incentive pay, and thus offer no monetary incentive for teachers to take on additional responsibilities. While the current legislation with regard to No Child Left Behind (2001) maintains clear benchmarks for "acceptable" performance in student achievement, salary schedules and additional compensation language do not provide incentive for teachers meeting or exceeding such benchmarks with their students.

The lack of clarity of available roles for teacher leadership can also discourage some from accepting roles. As noted on several occasions previously in this chapter, the nature of schools is one of change and for unexpected issues to arise. "Role ambiguity, conflict, and overload are broadly reported negative

side effects of teacher work redesign" (Hart, 1995, p. 12). Placing persons in a role for which they are not suited can be very detrimental to the individual, the initiative, and to recruiting future leaders. Every possible effort must be made to be very clear on the objective of the task at hand. Teachers in general are very pressed for time, and become very frustrated spending time on a task they feel they do not understand nor see the benefit of completing.

Preparation, then, is critical for teachers to be successful in leadership roles. Just as teachers must complete a period of training before becoming certified and manage a classroom on their own, so too should teachers be properly prepared to assume roles for which they are not accustomed. However, "there is ample evidence that teacher leaders are being asked to assume these roles with little or no training" (Murphy, 2005, p.108). A concerted effort, whether through attending workshops or seminars, taking specific related courses, visiting other districts where teachers are filling these roles, or shadowing individuals within the district they serve are all examples of ways that a teacher may become familiar with assuming the duties of a leadership role. It is the duty of the building administrator to understand the needs of teachers prior to difficulties arising, and work with them to provide the appropriate learning opportunities.

Obstacles to teacher leadership may also become apparent in situations where building principals simply do not have the same experience or knowledge base as the involved teacher, preventing them from recognizing the variety of ways the teacher could help benefit the school. For example, special education teachers have a specialized area of instruction that many principals may be less

familiar with than regular education teachers (Billingsley, 2007). This lack of understanding may serve as a hindrance to helping the building principal facilitate collaboration between regular and special education teachers on instructional endeavors.

With regard to teacher leadership in general, there are those who doubt the sincerity of its practice. A concern is that teacher leadership is "simply a modernized way to seduce teachers to take on additional tasks and responsibilities without the commensurate increase in their salary or time allowance" (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 334). Fitzgerald and Gunter note that this is an assertion not often presented in teacher leadership literature, and while it may be viewed as heretical, it is a concern that does exist.

The reality is that not all in the field of education are "sold" on the concept of incorporating teachers into more leadership roles. Whether due to compensatory concerns, lack of supports, or simply a clinging reverence for the traditional (if not antiquated) top-down model with regard to how schools operate, it is clear that the road to successful teacher leadership practices is not without obstacles. It is the recognition that obstacles do exist and the ability to proactively work to eliminate such barriers that will ultimately allow the capacity for leadership to grow within a school or district.

Concerns Theory

The development of concerns theory began in the late 1960s, and the work of Frances Fuller and her colleagues served as the pioneering research in this area (Hall & Hord, 1984). By use of the term "concern" as part of research,

this model has been able to provide a bit of flexibility in its application, since the term itself may differ in definition depending on the frame of reference for the individual or situation.

Concerns Theory has obvious applications to the field of education and to the perceptions of educators. Fuller (1969) confirmed some consistency in identifying common areas of concern for teachers, such as class control, content adequacy, the situations in which they teach, evaluations from supervisors, as well as the evaluations of their pupils (as cited in Hall & Hord, 1987, p. 54). The basis of the studies conducted under the framework of concerns theory have brought attention to the fact that these concerns need to be addressed or consider when developing teacher interventions or new initiatives within schools. As staff development is planned and delivered, the particular perceptions of teachers with regard to their problems and satisfactions should be kept in mind (Hall & Hord, 1987, p.55).

Through continued study, Fuller, Bown, and Peck in 1967 were able to deduce that the concerns of teachers could be grouped into four main clusters, and that these concerns were able to be predicted in how they changed as teachers grew in experience (as cited in Hall & Hord, 1987, p.56-57). The four clusters of concerns are labeled as follows:

Unrelated Concerns – potential concerns of the teacher tend not to be tied to teaching at all at the start of a pre-service teacher education program. Individual concerns are more based on their grade performance in classes, social gathering outside of work or school, etc.

Self Concerns – teachers are typically in this cluster during field experiences, and begin to have a focus on teaching. Concerns in this cluster may begin to identify themes of self-doubt or themes of inadequacy, such as wondering if students will learn or if class management will be able to be maintained.

Task Concerns – As individuals become fully engaged in and more comfortable in the school setting as teachers, their concerns are more focused on the job of teaching and the duties that accompany it. For example, concerns may relate to grading papers, lesson planning, and time management.

Impact Concerns – After gaining even more experience in the teaching profession, concerns now shift generally about whether or not their instructional delivery is helping students to learn and in general how they can improve their work. The focus becomes now on becoming a more effective teacher.

Further studies involving the use of Concerns Theory and the clusters of concerns have confirmed the progression of teachers through these levels as they progress throughout their careers. Marso & Pigge (1994) had completed a study of pre-service and in-service teachers, which resulted that those in pre-service programs demonstrated lower task and higher self concerns than did in-service teachers, who displayed a greater concern that students benefit from their efforts.

Olsen and Heyse (1990) used the Concerns Theory model when researching the role of mentors in helping address first-year or re-entry teacher concerns. Those teachers who had mentors showed a decrease in self and task concern over-time, with an increase in impact concerns throughout the year. Those without mentors also showed an increase of impact concerns while self concerns lessened; however, task concerns appeared to remain consistent. This study demonstrates how interventions on behalf of teachers may address how they progress through stages of concern, a key theme in why assessing concerns is appropriate and critical when implementing change within the school setting or helping teachers to develop their role.

Stages of Concern

Since the work of Fuller and her colleagues, Hall, Hord, and their colleagues have continued this application of concerns in the same theme of the four clusters set forth by Fuller, but have identified in more detail their systematic description (Hall & Hord, 1987, p.58) Their efforts recognized that concerns will change over time, but do not bind an individual to a one-size-fits all path or progression. The stages of concern cited by Hall & Hord (1987, p.60) are as follows:

Stage 0 – Awareness: Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated.

Stage 1 – Informational: A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more about it is indicated. The person seems to be unworried about himself/herself in relation to the innovation. She/he is

interested in substantive aspects of the innovation in a selfless manner

such as general characteristics, effects, and requirements for use.

Stage 2 – Personal: Individual is uncertain about the demand of the

innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role

with the innovation. This includes analysis of his/her role in relation to the

reward structure of the organization, decision-making, and consideration

of potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment.

Financial or status implications of the program for self and colleagues may

also be reflected.

Stage 3 – Management: Attention is focused on the process and tasks of

using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues

related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands

are utmost.

Stage 4 – Consequence: Attention focuses on impact of the innovation on

student and his/her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on

relevance of the innovation for students, evaluation of student outcomes,

including performance and competencies, and changes needed to

increase student outcomes.

Stage 5 – Collaboration: The focus is on coordination and cooperation

with others regarding the use of innovation.

Stage 6 – Refocusing: The focus is on exploration of more universal

benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or

replacement with a more powerful alternative. Individual has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of the evaluation.

As mentioned earlier, while greater definition is provided to the stages of concern from the original work of Fuller, the increased number of stages still falls within the original four clusters. Stage 0 represents a phase of the "Unrelated" cluster; Stages 1 and 2 part of the "Self" cluster; Stage 3 falls into the "Task" cluster; and Stages 4, 5, and 6 detail the "Impact" cluster. These stages align well with developing the concept of teacher leadership and incorporating it as a practice within a school system. With the objective of allowing teachers to have more power, and thus more impact on school programs and student achievement, it is important to assess their levels of concern in a proactive manner to set them up for success in such endeavors.

Assessing the Stages of Concern in which an individual's thoughts or perspective may be categorized first requires an understanding of the stages themselves. After gaining that understanding, Hall & Hord (1987) describe three strategies or techniques that may be used to assess Stages of Concern: one-legged conferencing, open-ended concern statements, and the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (p.61).

The concept of one-legged conference was cited by Hall & Hord (1987) as being borrowed from the 1975 work of Sidney Simon. The conferences are meant to take place in an informal manner within the school setting, where the principal may ask questions of classroom teachers in an attempt to understand their feelings toward a particular initiative or innovation occurring within the

school. Since principals often have limited time for informal discussion with teachers, focus is required to ask teachers the right questions and follow-up with appropriate questions in order to gain insight to their frame of reference. The interviewer should begin with open-ended questions, then follow-up with more specific questions to "get at" the Stages of Concern. The information learned in these interviews, though brief, may be used in order to provide appropriate interventions or trainings in place to help lessen the concerns of the teacher and help the initiative move forward. Interventions may be as simple as offering encouragement or as complex as formal professional development sessions (Hall & Hord, 1987).

The open-ended concerns statement is an opportunity for teachers to voice their concerns in writing. A technique that is simplistic in nature, used by Fuller and Case in 1972, then followed by Newlove and Hall in 1976, have used this method which involves giving a teacher a piece of paper with a statement such as "When you think about _____, what are you concerned about? (Please be frank and use complete sentences)" then give the teacher an opportunity to respond in as much detail as they choose (as cited in Hall & Hord, 1987, p.66). After collecting the responses, they are then able to be analyzed and categorized into the Stages of Concern as mentioned.

A Stages of Concern Questionnaire is a more formalized and systematic method of data collection and is used when the reliability of data is particularly important (Hall & Hord, 1984). Using a seven-point Likert scale, this quantitative approach may allow researchers to gauge the amount of concern in a particular

area or regard to an innovation. As cited in Hall & Hord (194, p.70), an individual

interested in applying this method is best served by reading Hall, George, and

Rutherford's 1979 work *Measuring Stages of Concern about the Innovation: A*

Manual for the use of the SoC Questionnaire, due to the more detailed approach

this technique requires.

It is the technique of the one-legged conference that will be modified in

order to obtain teacher perceptions in this study, as will be discussed in the

following chapter on the methodology used in this dissertation.

Summary

The needs to personalize instruction and the demands of accountability

have brought about the necessity of reform in schools. The increasing ability to

obtain data on student performance also carries the responsibility of analysis and

processing data to drive instruction. Delivery of planned instruction must

differentiate for varied learning styles and abilities, requiring a tremendous

amount of thought and preparation. Parents, students, and community members

must be informed and included on the development of policy and procedure. A

sense of vision and purpose must be adhered to and advertised to all

stakeholders. In a nutshell, the business of education has become a rather

daunting task.

Several roles are available to help schools achieve their mission and

ultimate tasks. While principals have traditionally taken on the weight of such

roles, the number of competent and capable teachers rising to the occasion to

take the lead on school initiatives has increased. As the number of roles

available to a teacher increases, allowing them to broaden their reach and fully utilize their skills and talents, the greater the numbers of those who are willing emerge. Often principals welcome the help and respect the expertise that teachers have to offer.

There is still, however, an impasse that remains. While the importance of utilizing teachers as leaders is widely recognized, and a distributed approach is desired by both teachers and administrators, schools have not transformed to a distributed model to the fullest extent possible. By addressing teacher concerns with regard to innovation and understanding the perceptions of both principals and teachers, schools may move forward in reaching the shared goal of increased efficiency and student achievement.

This chapter provided a review of relevant literature as it relates to the study and the phenomenon of teacher leadership. Additionally, further detail regarding the conceptual and theoretical frameworks referenced in this study was provided and discussed. In Chapter Three, the methodology by which this study was conducted will be developed and explained in detail for the reader.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The introduction of No Child Left Behind (2001) Legislation introduced an era of accountability unprecedented in public education in the United States. Along with the advancement of the ability to compile and analyze data on student achievement, the task list for administrators and teachers alike has grown to a sometimes unmanageable degree without an efficient system of trust and responsibility between these two groups of stakeholders. The concept of teacher leadership through informal roles where teachers take the lead in curriculum development, data analysis, and development of school policies, has become a valued trend in many districts. School districts seek to find ways to tap into the talents and strengths of the professional staff in order to create a distributed model for leadership within schools. Following the conceptual framework of Spillane(2006), who asserts that the presence of a leadership practice must become evident in schools as opposed to merely a blueprint or recipe, this study utilizes a qualitative approach to examine how such a climate may be better facilitated in schools (Spillane, 2006). Additionally, the theoretical framework of Concerns Theory and the Stages of Concern as developed by Hall and Hord (1987) will be employed to categorize the experiences and perspectives of participants. The use of these stages will be vital in order to categorize and place emphasis on the nature of responses, examining if the heart of the perception lies in concerns over one's self and assigned duties or if the emphasis is on the benefit of the students and enhancement of the school environment. By

examining the disconnect between how teachers perceive teacher leadership in comparison to the perceptions of building administrators, it is the intent of the study to enable a more proactive approach to improving conditions for teacher leadership to occur through an understanding of pre-existing concerns, perceptions, and obstacles.

Statement of the Problem

This study examines the perceptions of teacher leadership between teachers and building administrators in an attempt to better facilitate its implementation in school districts. The development of a distributed model for school leadership through the empowerment of teacher leaders has been a focus of several public school districts in the state of Pennsylvania. Though teachers seek the ability to expand their influence, and there is recognition that the demands on building administrators are nearly impossible to meet (Danielson, 2007), an impasse still often remains when creating teacher leadership roles.

Research Questions

The over-arching research question addressed within this study is the following:

How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions of teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice as it exists in their schools?

The following sub-questions are also addressed as an examination of more specified aspects of teacher leadership while addressing the more general theme of the study:

1) How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the types of leadership roles that teachers should fill within their setting?

2) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of how teacher leadership is supported?

3) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of the obstacles that exist to teacher leadership?

4) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the identification of teacher leaders?

Interview Questions

The interview questions used in this study are aimed at answering the research questions posed by the researcher, and are developed in such a way as that the responses may be coded according to a level of concern as identified by Hall and Hord (1987) regarding the innovations occurring within the participants' school setting. In order to best solicit and understand the perspective of each participant as the phenomenon of teacher leadership is examined, the list of interview questions is framed to center around four broad main questions correlating to the research sub-questions, with potential follow-up questions pre-determined in order to draw out further depth and detail from participant responses. Additional follow-up questions were used as necessary to allow participants to share experiences and perspectives relevant to the research questions being addressed.

Prior to the start of the interview session, the definition of a teacher leader as described for the purpose of this study was stated for the participant. This definition, referencing teachers who "lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p.5), provided a frame of reference for participants to reflect upon for their answers and allowed for each participant to hear the same introduction prior to the start of the interview. The participants were made aware of the interview questions prior to the start of the interview, with the list of questions and potential follow-up questions attached to the invitation to participate letter they received. Participants were encouraged to share personal experiences as they framed their responses.

Listed below is the list of interview questions, along with potential follow-up questions, provided to participants prior to conducting the personal interview with them:

1. What types of leadership roles should teachers fill within their school or district?

   - Are teachers currently filling these roles within your school or district?
   - Since your involvement in ELI, have you seen more opportunities for teachers to serve as leaders? How so?
   - Since your involvement in ELI, how have teachers created or initiated more of their own opportunities to take on leadership roles?

2. How can teachers be supported to effectively serve as leaders?

   - How may administrators support teacher leadership?
   - How may teachers support teacher leadership?
   - What could help make you feel more supported as a teacher leader?

- Is there a culture that supports teacher leadership within your school?

3. What obstacles exist to teacher leadership?

- Since your involvement in ELI, how has compensation for involvement in teacher leadership practices changed?
- How do teachers perceive the teacher leadership practices of their colleagues?

4. How are teacher leaders selected within your school?

- Who is most likely to be selected as a teacher leader within your school?
- What are characteristics that a teacher leader should possess?

Research Design

This is a qualitative study and uses a comparative case study approach to investigate perspectives of teacher leadership as they exist in a sample of two Western Pennsylvania school districts. Through the use of in-depth personal interviews and document review, this study provides insight as to how teacher leadership is perceived within respective districts by teachers and building administrators. Aspects of the interview process and solicitation of data also resembles a phenomenological approach, as it describes the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the participants with regard to how they have experienced teacher leadership.

Berg (2009, p. 317) cites that a case study method may be defined as "an attempt to systematically investigate an event or a set of related events with the specific aim of describing and explaining this phenomenon." While he recognizes that the case study method may be not be recognized as a method quite as rigorous and systematic as other types of research, Berg does state that

it is capable of examining a single or even complex phenomenon, thus lending the approach to the subject matter of this study.

Cresswell (2007) describes the collective case study approach, where multiple case studies may be conducted using the same protocol to further illustrate the point. Multiple case designs do have advantages over single case designs. As Harriott and Firestone (1983) are cited in Yin (2009, p. 53) evidence from multiple cases is considered to be more compelling and makes the research more robust.

Stake (2006), in his discussion of multiple case study approaches, states the need for cases to be selected in such a way as to define what binds them together through a common concept or purpose. In this case, where the participating districts all have demonstrated a commitment to enhancing teacher leadership as a practice through their participation in a formal agreement with ELI to help its facilitation, the phenomenon of teacher leadership will be more deeply examined through its analysis in two different environments. The fact that two districts are included in the sample, however, does not necessarily mean this is a "comparative" study as may be implied, rather research under the same case study framework where the procedure is replicated (Yin, 2009, p. 53).

As research continues in this area, it is clear that teacher leadership truly is a phenomenon, given that it may occur in so many different ways and in a number of different circumstances. Gaining a deeper insight into the teacher leadership experience and the essence of leading one's peers will help to understand this phenomenon, as well as spark further research is this area

(Raffanti, 2008). Likewise, understanding the experience of distributed leadership from the principal's point of view in terms of "letting go" of authority and decision-making, can help understand how the appropriate climate and resources to be put in place to help teacher leadership to flourish.

Teachers and principals alike have differing perceptions with regard to who should fill leadership roles or when empowering teachers may be necessary. However, the phenomenon does take place across school districts and buildings in various forms. The intent of this study was to capture the perceptions of the phenomenon of teacher leadership in the eyes of teachers and building administrators through the use of personal interviews in order to seek common themes with regard to the successes and shortcomings involved with this practice.

The qualitative approach utilized in this study is appropriate due to the need for a detailed understanding of the concept of teacher leadership. Although up until the 1970's quantitative research had been synonymous with research in education, qualitative research has emerged in this field in order to address issues not appropriately addressed through quantification (Wright, 2006, p. 796). Qualitative research is used to provide an understanding of a concept from the perspective of the participants of the study (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). In order to bring out the true feelings and perceptions of those who will participate in the study, the visits made to their homes or school buildings allowed them to deliver their own points and empower them to have their voices heard (Creswell, 2007).

To successfully conduct qualitative research, the researcher should possess relevant knowledge and technical skills (Hunt, 2010). For the lone researcher facilitating this study, relevant knowledge had been established due to previous personal experience as a teacher who has served in several leadership roles prior to serving as a building principal and now central office administrator. Additionally, the current district of employment for the researcher has participated in ELI three school years previous to conducting the study, thus providing what Elliot Eisner terms "connoisseurship" through an appreciation of the educational practice being studied (Smith, 2005).

Within a phenomenological approach, the researcher not only seeks to draw out a description of the experience of the participants, but also make an interpretation based on the lived experiences of those being interviewed (Creswell, 2007). Those who took part in the study have had an experience with the phenomenon, and the study asks about the meaning of their experience.

A phenomenological study will often use personal interviews as the primary method for data collection. Giorgi (2010) notes the issues in conducting studies in a true phenomenological fashion, and a qualitative design may draw the dismay of many researchers. However, phenomenology is inductive and descriptive (Flood, 2010) as it seeks to understand the perspectives of individuals, and thus lends itself well to the case study framework and research questions framed in this study.

Other studies on the topic of teacher leadership have utilized a similar approach to their research. Freeney (2009, p. 214) completed a study on

teachers as high school department chairs where he used a case study approach that "employs a phenomenological lens to investigate departmental leaders' perceptions and definitions of their role in leadership and school improvement." Angelle and Schmid (2007) also utilized a qualitative, interview method to obtain data for research on the concept of teacher leadership. In order to fully draw out the feelings and experiences of individuals as they have related to teacher leadership, this researcher believes that in-depth personal interviews are necessary to obtain the quality of data that produces meaningful insight.

As a follow-up to the teacher and principal interviews, the researcher summarized the obtained responses and findings in a narrative and presented them to the superintendent of each school district and the teacher association president from Anderson school district. The association president from Harbor Valley did not participate in the study. While focusing on the maintenance of confidentiality, the purpose of this activity was to also assess the perspectives of those individuals and seek their reflective response to the perceptions of teacher leadership within their district. The feedback received from sharing the summary of findings to these individuals through a discussion at a mutually-agreed upon time and location allows the Conclusions and Recommendations sections presented in Chapter Five of this dissertation to be more robust. The impact of this study is designed with the intent of understanding teacher and principal perceptions of teacher leadership in order to better facilitate its practice, and the views of two critical instruments in establishing distributed practice will further enhance the knowledge base of the reader.

Corroborated with artifacts and documents within school systems attesting to the practice of teacher leadership, the structure of this study is designed to provide robust, meaningful insight into the phenomenon of teacher leadership as it exists in those schools investigated.

Sample

This study included participants from two school districts, each who currently are taking part in the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) through the University of Pittsburgh, and whose focus is on increasing the capacity of schools to promote teacher leadership and distributed practice. This distinction will be used to maintain a level of consistency with regard to how teacher leadership and distributed practice may be valued within the school district. While participation in ELI is not a surefire method for success in all circumstances, it does require both a monetary and time commitment on the part of a district that would not be made if there was not a sincere attempt to succeed in promoting and supporting teacher leadership in their schools.

Due to the criteria for participating districts designated for selection for the study, the sample obtained may be classified as purposeful. ELI currently has a total of 18 districts participating in their program with at least two years of experience working within the program. For the purpose of this study, the districts selected for participation must have been working with ELI for at least this period of time. This requirement is established in order that there has been some period of time for the collaborative relationship between the district and ELI to take effect.

The two districts selected for the study are located in the same county of Western Pennsylvania, creating convenience in order to have access to participants for in-depth interviewing and member-checking. Additionally, restricting sample selection to a particular geographic area or region allows an enhanced ability to compare responses due to working with students of similar demographics. However, in an effort to maintain the confidentiality of both the districts and individuals participating in the study, there is no use of any descriptive information about the districts which may cause them to be identifiable. School districts and individual participants are referred to by pseudonyms, naming the participating districts fictitiously as Anderson School District and Harbor Valley School District.

Those districts proposed for participation in the study were contacted via a letter to the superintendent, as well a phone and email communication. The letter detailed the intent of the study as well as a summary of expectations should he or she permit their employees to participate. Emails and phone conversation were used as appropriate to discuss the proposed details of the study and how information would be obtained. Written agreement was obtained from the superintendents of the respective school districts in order to conduct the study within their district and solicit volunteers to be interviewed in order to collect data.

A sample of 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon are recommended as an appropriate number to take part in the interview process (Polkinghorne, 1989). Stake (2006) maintains that when selecting a sample,

"while balance and variety are important, relevance to the topic and the opportunity to learn are usually of the greatest importance."

In Anderson School District, four principals and three teachers volunteered to take part in the study. One principal was currently assigned in the high school, one worked in the middle school, and the other two each was the principal of an elementary school building. Two of the teachers were assigned to the elementary schools and the other teacher in the high school.

The participants who volunteered from Harbor Valley School District included two principals, each from an elementary school, and three teachers, also working at the elementary level. While great efforts were made to obtain representatives from the secondary level at Harbor Valley, no individuals who were contacted from the sample list responded to any attempt to ask for participation. While the ELI initiative has been present on a district-wide scale, the emphasis on district initiatives presented at regional meetings has been through elementary representation, so while the researcher would prefer a balance in participant grade level assignment, those who did volunteer still are able to provide a clear lens into the teacher leadership phenomenon as it occurs at Harbor Valley.

A table listing the participants from each district using the pseudonym assigned for this study in order to protect confidentiality, along with their building level assignment at the time of the interview and gender, is provided below:

Table 1

Teacher and Principal Interview Participants

Teacher	District	Assignment	Gender
Alice	Anderson	Elementary	Female
Barbara	Anderson	Elementary	Female
Charles	Anderson	High School	Male
Donna	Harbor Valley	Elementary	Female
Ellen	Harbor Valley	Elementay	Female
Francis	Harbor Valley	Elementary	Female
Principal	**District**		
Adam	Anderson	High School	Male
Bruce	Anderson	Middle School	Male
Connie	Anderson	Elementary	Female
Doug	Anderson	Elementary	Male
Helen	Harbor Valley	Elementary	Female
Laura	Harbor Valley	Elementary	Female

The individuals who participated in the study were selected with the help

of a Colleague in Residence (CIR) familiar with the school districts through ELI.

This individual plays a large role in organizing many of the regional and local

events organized through ELI, and is aware of the participants and contributing

members from districts in the area the two districts are located in. Rosters of core

team members from each district who had been part of previous regional events

were also used to compile lists of individuals to contact to request participation.

Additionally, participants during the course of the interview process suggested

individuals to contact as part of their first-hand knowledge of leadership practice

taking place within the school.

Each district at the start of their participation with ELI is asked to identify

members of their faculty to compose a "core team" who will serve as liaisons

between ELI functions and meetings and the staff as a whole. The teachers

selected are meant to provide a balanced representation of buildings within the school district, grade levels taught, and years of experience. Building and central office level administrators may also serve on the core team, with the intent of providing a forum for administrators and faculty to work toward achieving common goals through a collaborative approach. It is from this core team that interview participants were selected. Recommendations for which specific individuals to approach were based on which teachers are viewed by their peers as leaders, or who have taken part in leadership activities under the auspices of ELI and the distributed approach that it promotes. Building principals selected to participate in the study have been active in the ELI initiative and/or have serve as the administrator in the building where individuals identified as teacher leaders through ELI are employed.

Interview Procedure

Each interview was conducted on a one-on-one basis and lasted no more than 30 minutes in length. Arrangements were made for the convenience of the participant, attempting to meet with them in their workplace during, before, or after their work day. The bulk of the interviews took place during the summer months as well, and many teachers and principals were willing to give of their personal time to take part in the study. A written assurance of confidentiality was provided to the participant, including the signature of both the researcher and interviewee.

A recording device was used to document verbatim responses of each individual, which was then used to transcribe the interview for the purpose of

analysis as well as member checking for accuracy. The participant received a copy of the transcript and was asked to review it for accuracy. Participants had the opportunity to remove any statements that they believed did not accurately state what they were trying to convey, as well as add to or clarify any responses. Stake (2006, p.37) calls member checking a "vital technique for researchers," where after gathering data or even constructing a rough draft of a report the researchers asks participant to review the document for accuracy or possible misinterpretation. The interview questions were open-ended in nature, seeking to permit the participants to provide their own experiences and perspectives without bias from the researcher. It was therefore critical to provide an opportunity for individuals to re-visit their responses, establishing that they provided information that truly matches their experiences and perspectives.

Upon compilation of the transcribed interviews, initial responses to the four over-arching interview questions were coded according to the levels of concern as described by Hall and Hord (1987). The coding was categorized by similar categories, primarily by teachers and administrators, then by elementary or secondary levels within those groups. Analysis of the coded responses was then used to address each research question as they correspond to the given interview question as documented by Table 1 earlier in this chapter.

Validity and Reliability

A common practice in qualitative studies is for the researcher to return to informants a transcription of the entire narrative of an interview, as well as the interpretations derived from the narrative, for the purpose of confirming accuracy

and credibility (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The practice of member checking was used in this study for the purpose of establishing validity. Allowing participants to review their interview responses or the rough draft of a report on their perceptions ensured accuracy of interpretation, and in some cases new data for the study was presented upon the review of the participant that enhanced the quality of the report.

Prior to the interviews being conducted in a pilot study, a list of proposed interview questions proposed for use was submitted to a selection of experts for the purpose of establishing face validity. These individuals consisted of two retired school superintendents, one of which serves currently as a Colleagues in Residence working with the Educational Leadership Initiative, as well as two currently practicing classroom teachers, one with experience with ELI.

Triangulation was used to establish cohesion between the responses of the participants and the practice as it is occurring within the school districts. Used for the purpose of assuring the proper interpretations have been made, triangulation is meant to confirm that the conclusions made "mean what they are supposed to mean" or provide "ideas about how the information would be interpreted by different people" (Stake, 2006, p. 36) Triangulation may occur by cross-checking through at least three different sources or methodologies of obtaining data. "The different sources may include additional participants, other methodologies, or previously conducted studies" (Rudenstam & Newton, 2007, p. 114).

Within this study, interview data regarding perceptions of teacher leadership was solicited from two school districts, providing two participant group points of view. In addition to interviewing both principals and building principals, the sharing of input and solicitation of meaningful reflection by the superintendents and teacher association presidents provides perceptions and data from a perspective unique to those teachers and administrators selected for inclusion in the interview protocol. Additionally, documents such as professional development agendas, department or building meeting notes, and so on were used to gauge the level at which teacher leadership is incorporated into the school culture and practice. Finally, the comparison to previous studies in this area will be used as a final component to determine if the findings of the study are consistent with research in this area, providing the three sources of data necessary for triangulation to be used. It is important to note, however, as Rudestam and Newton (2007, p. 115) point out, that "it is equally likely with qualitative studies that different kinds of data will yield different interpretations".

Reliability was established for the interview protocol and the coding results through code-recode procedures, where the researcher classified participant responses according to the Stages of Concern framework multiple times to help ensure consistency and accuracy. Reliability is enhanced through the use of a recording device, permitting the researcher to stop and replay participant responses to ensure accuracy in transcription of responses and appropriate coding of those responses (Creswell, 2007). The use of member checking also adds a layer of reliability due to the fact participants when reviewing their

interview transcript have an opportunity to evaluate if they answered questions

the way that they likely would again at that point in time, clarifying any

information for the researcher what statements they may feel does not represent

their true feelings prior to its use within the study.

Pilot Procedures

A pilot protocol was established in order to refine interview questions and

procedures, as recommended by Creswell (2007). The interview questions were

developed to align to the research questions and theoretical framework

established for this study, thus making it necessary to pose the originally

formatted questions to individuals in a similar environment as those who were

part of the formal study. Prior to conducting the pilot study, however, the approval

of the Institutional Review Board was obtained. Upon administration of the

interview protocol and follow-up conferencing, the researcher was able to gauge

if those questions truly got to the heart of the phenomenon of teacher leadership

and provoked the responses desired to understand how both teachers and

administrators relate their perspectives and experiences.

One school district that met the criteria of those being selected to

participate in the formal study, but did not participate in the formal study, was

selected to be part of the pilot procedure. Selection of the district for the pilot was

purposeful and by convenience, based on access and geographic proximity

(Cresswell, 2007). The district was located in a county adjoining to the two

districts selected for the formal study, and also participated in many of the

regional ELI-affiliated events with those districts. After receiving the approval of

the district superintendent, three teachers and three building administrators from the district were asked to take part in an interview using the designed protocol. A balance between elementary and secondary participants was maintained in order ensure questions are relevant and purposeful for each level, interviewing one principal and one teacher from each the high school, middle school, and elementary levels.

During the interview, a recording device was used to ensure the accurate documenting of participant responses. After completing the interviews, the recorded responses were transcribed for the purpose of analysis and coding. Interview participants received a copy of the transcript for their review, ensuring accuracy and correctness of interpretation of their responses by providing the pilot participants the opportunity to add, remove, or clarify any responses to the interview questions via email, phone call, or face-to-face conferencing.

Coding was completed in alignment with the seven Stages of Concern as developed by Hall and Hord (1987). While an initial coding framework had been developed prior to coding the pilot interview responses based on these stages, the data obtained through the pilot procedure was used to refine the coding process and establish a more detailed and focused coding method as necessary for analysis in the formal study as it seeks to respond to the proposed research questions.

As a follow-up to the interviews conducted with pilot participants, a second face-to-face meeting was scheduled with each individual interviewee soliciting their feedback on the interview on topics that include their level of comfort

throughout the interview, the level to which the questions posed were understandable, and suggestions for questions they might have wished they were asked in order to help clarify their perspectives.

Documents such as professional development agendas, department or building meeting notes, and other relevant items were used to determine the implementation of teacher leadership and the roles that teachers are playing. As part of the pilot process, more ideas for document and artifact compilation were identified so as to attempt to replicate their examination in the formal study.

Finally, the data obtained in the pilot process was summarized into a narrative and shared with the district superintendent and teacher union president. A personal discussion was held with each individual to solicit their reflections on the perceptions obtained, as well as seek their input on additional interview questions they felt would contribute to the relevance of the study, as well as what data they personally felt would be valuable to them in the roles that they serve.

As described by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), the pilot study served as a "dress rehearsal," identifying problems that were unanticipated and will play a critical role in any modifications or even overhauling that may be required. All data obtained from the pilot process was used to refine and fully develop the protocol which was used in the formal study in order to best address the research questions.

As a result of the pilot experience, the interview protocol was changed in preparation for the formal study. Through the implementation of the protocol and discussion with the participants, it was found that many of the questions

appeared to be repetitive, and were posed in an order that appeared to have a slight effect on the one-legged conference effect desired to gauge stages of concern under the theoretical framework. The format of the interview questions, using four main questions supported by a number of potential follow-up questions, was developed as a result of the pilot process.

Data Presentation

The interview protocol used in this study allowed participant responses to be recorded for the purposes of transcription, coding, and member checking. Documented responses will remain anonymous for each participant. Portions of transcript of each interview session will be presented in chapter four of this document as it is relevant to address the research questions and drawing together common themes observed while coding responses.

Additionally, references to documents collected as relevant to the focus of this study are incorporated into the narrative in part as they apply to addressing the research questions. Such documents may include descriptions of professional development activities, meeting agendas, or other items as relevant to establishing the presence of a distributed leadership practice or emphasis on teacher leadership.

Finally, the reflections of the superintendent and teacher associated president of each district included in the sample are composed into a narrative. The insights obtained from these individuals provide an additional perspective that is valuable in facilitating teacher leadership practice within a school system.

The overall findings and conclusions of the study as pieced together into a narrative utilize a phenomenological lens, drawing together teacher experiences and perceptions to paint a picture of teacher leadership as it exists through the eyes of the participants. Emphasis is placed on identifying the common themes presented within the teacher and administrator groups, as well as the gaps that may exist between the two.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research design that is used to address the questions posed in this study. This chapter described the sample that was utilized for the study and provided a list of interview questions that were used to solicit data from the participants. Methods for establishing reliability and validity were discussed, which included the description of pilot procedures. Finally, this chapter detailed how the findings of the research are presented in this document, which occurs in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The over-arching research question addressed in this study is the following:

> How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions of teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice as it exists in their schools?

More specifically, the following sub-questions will also be addressed and supported using the Stages of Concern (Hall & Hord, 1987) theoretical framework introduced in Chapters One and Two of this dissertation, as well as being examined in relation to the conceptual framework of distributed leadership practice as it occurs within the school districts from which data was obtained:

1) How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the types of leadership roles that teachers should fill within their setting?

2) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of how teacher leadership is supported?

3) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of the obstacles that exist to teacher leadership?

4) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the identification of teacher leaders?

The results of data collection in regard to these research questions are presented within this chapter.

The One-Legged Conference and Stages of Concern

During each interview session with the teacher and principal participants, a series of four open response questions were posed in direct correlation to the four research sub-questions used to guide this study. These four interview questions were devised to be general and open-ended in nature, though phrased to elicit a response from the respondent to match their initial thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the topic being discussed. This manner of questioning is similar in regard to the One-Legged Conferencing method used to assess the stage of concern an individual may be categorized by in relation to a particular initiative (Hall & Hord, 1987). Whereas the one-legged conference may often be seen as an open-ended writing prompt where a teacher or other participant may provide a written reaction to a prompt, the interview format sought to achieve the same concept through an oral response.

As was detailed in Chapter Two of this dissertation, Hall and Hord built on the four clusters of concern traditionally viewed in concern theory, realizing further detail by identifying seven stages of concern as listed below (Hall & Hord, 1987, p.60):

Stage 0 – Awareness: Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated.

Stage 1 – Informational: A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more about it is indicated. The person seems to be unworried about himself/herself in relation to the innovation. She/he is

interested in substantive aspects of the innovation in a selfless manner

such as general characteristics, effects, and requirements for use.

Stage 2 – Personal: Individual is uncertain about the demand of the

innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role

with the innovation. This includes analysis of his/her role in relation to the

reward structure of the organization, decision-making, and consideration

of potential conflicts with existing structures or personal commitment.

Financial or status implications of the program for self and colleagues may

also be reflected.

Stage 3 – Management: Attention is focused on the process and tasks of

using the innovation and the best use of information and resources. Issues

related to efficiency, organizing, managing, scheduling, and time demands

are utmost.

Stage 4 – Consequence: Attention focuses on impact of the innovation on

student and his/her immediate sphere of influence. The focus is on the

relevance of the innovation for students, evaluation of student outcomes,

including performance and competencies, and changes needed to

increase student outcomes.

Stage 5 – Collaboration: The focus is on coordination and cooperation

with others regarding the use of innovation.

Stage 6 – Refocusing: The focus is on exploration of more universal

benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or

replacement with a more powerful alternative. The individual has definite ideas about alternatives to the proposed or existing form of the evaluation.

Responses to each of the one-legged conference questions were coded according how the content of the response matched one or more of the stages described. Since the responses were open-ended, and there was no limit on the length of the responses, it was possible that the response from a given individual may correspond to characteristics of more than one stage.

Following each of the one-legged conference format questions in the interview protocol, the research used a series of follow-up questions as necessary to provide greater depth to the perceptions of teachers and principals in order to answer each of the research questions. The themes that emerge from these participant responses are explained in the following sections of this chapter, categorized by the research sub-question they address and discussing how they correspond to a the distributed approach to leadership by schools working within the Educational Leadership Initiative and the stages of concern coded from participant responses.

Roles of Teacher Leaders

The first of the one-legged conference questions was "What types of leadership roles should teachers fill within their school or district?" Responses to this opening question were coded in Table 2:

Table 2

Response Coding Regarding Roles of Teacher Leaders

		Stage of Concern						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teacher	District							
Alice	Anderson						X	
Barbara	Anderson					X	X	
Charles	Anderson				X		X	
Donna	Harbor Valley						X	
Ellen	Harbor Valley						X	
Francis	Harbor Valley						X	
Administrator	District							
Adam	Anderson					X		
Bruce	Anderson					X		
Connie	Anderson					X	X	
Doug	Anderson					X		
Helen	Harbor Valley					X	X	
Laura	Harbor Valley		X			X	X	X

Each of the teachers who were interviewed had at least a portion of their response that was coded in the Stage 5 – Collaboration. An emphasis was placed on professional development and improving professional practice by sharing best practices and interacting as a team. Both formal and informal leadership roles were discussed, including mentorship opportunities for less experienced teachers and individuals using their strengths to help colleagues grow.

The response coded as Stage 4 – Consequence, given by Anderson elementary teacher Barbara, spoke of the importance of teachers modeling for students, impacting how they approach their behavior in the school community. Charles, teaching at the secondary level at Anderson, focused a portion of his response in the Stage 3 – Management category, as he also noted the importance of committees, department chairs, and grade level leaders as a major component in facilitating the academic mission of the school.

When coding the principal responses, the bulk of responses fell under the Stage 4 – Consequence label, where the focus is on student outcomes. Roles of teacher leaders are described in terms of how they can improve student achievement, and leadership roles should be based around this goal. This emphasis was paired by half of the participants also providing Stage 5 responses, recognizing how teacher collaboration is critical in order in increase student performance.

Laura, elementary principal at Harbor Valley, shared responses not only coded as falling in Stages 4 and 5, but also in Stage 1 – Informational and Stage 6 – Refocusing. She noted how teachers may be uncertain while determining their leadership role, but ultimately when provided with support in a distributed leadership culture can use their abilities to affect social change.

The major themes that were revealed through the coding of participant responses regarding the roles of teacher leaders, including all related follow-up questions, are described in more detail in the following sections.

Teachers as Instructional Leaders

Within a school or school district, the obvious emphasis must be on providing effective instruction to students. Teachers are the direct link to providing that instruction to students, and the participants from Anderson reflected that emphasis on instructional leadership as a role for teachers as a theme. The affiliation with ELI helps to incorporate this practice of instructional leadership not just as a stand-alone role, but also part of the teachers' function in a distributed leadership setting.

Adam, a high school principal at Anderson, states:

> I think that when we talked about leadership in relation to ELI, one of the things we said is that leadership is a function, not necessarily a role. So, (there are) people not having formal titles but assuming roles in leadership within the school. I think in terms of these roles, most important is what we do, our primary focus, which is that of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. I think that those are the three areas of our work that are most important.

Also at the secondary level, Bruce, the middle school principal, adds when examining roles of teacher leaders we should look at "the main goal of why we're here, and that's for students." He also states that when teachers serve as leaders, the focus should be on "anything that helps improve instructional practice or helps students to achieve more."

While administrators share the perspective that teacher leadership goals should be based on improving instruction and meeting the needs of students, Barbara, an elementary teacher at Anderson, also expressed classroom leadership as a primary role for teacher leadership, stressing the examples they must set for students, colleagues, and the community:

> Within their schools I think that (teacher) leadership roles should be being a classroom leader. To model to their students how they should behave and be part of the school community. I also think that within their peers or colleagues they should model how they expect others to behave, whether it's the way they are speaking, the way they carry themselves, or things like that.

The emphasis on classroom leadership and how that relates to instruction was apparent at Anderson by researching their work as curriculum committees, working to collaboratively to ensure alignment to state academic standards and continuity across grade levels. Additionally, the teachers at Anderson have worked to develop assessment portfolios, demonstrating how student growth and

achievement may be documented and bridge their assessments to the curriculum they had developed.

Harbor Valley also had a clear demonstration of collaboration and teacher initiative to accomplish academic tasks. One notable endeavor was the development of standards-based report cards for use at the elementary level. Not only did teachers work together to break away from the traditional letter grade format of report cards to develop a record of assessment that is more specific in terms of what students can do, they also developed detailed presentations for parent and community groups, helping to communicate the change and promote understanding of its advantages.

Teacher-Initiated Leadership

As a distributed approach to leadership takes hold within the school setting, the opportunity for teacher leadership to take place should not be confined to a specific event, but rather part of the practice and culture of the school. Districts working in the Educational Leadership Initiative identify areas where teachers may help shape the culture and practice, but one of the goals is for teachers to be a part of the process that identifies those areas of need. Teachers who embrace the leadership aspect of their position will often seek out ways to contribute or initiate growth opportunities to help their colleagues, their building, or the school system at large.

Connie, an elementary school principal at Anderson school district, has witnessed how their involvement in ELI has helped create a culture where teachers initiate more of the strategies that have helped them be successful:

Some of the initiatives that we brought teacher leaders on board for were definitely us directing and asking for contributions from our teacher leaders and asking them to share that vision, but I have to say that I have seen over the past couple of years teachers coming to us in terms of "We want to get this data group together, this is what we think it might look like." Anything like that to "Hey, we don't offer tutoring." Three of them getting together and saying "Can we create that and figure out how that may look so we can offer it to our kids and they can do better on this or that?" I have to say I see it, really, as they bring a lot of things to us. I think it all came from communication. ELI was a big thing for us, really letting us as a district, and some changes on our own end, let the wall down and opened up the lines of communication.

Connie also goes on to relate how distributed or shared leadership has allowed teachers to become problem solvers in their buildings or for the district rather than simply presenting issues or concerns:

I think prior to ELI, or prior to shared leadership or teacher leadership, it was very much a "here it is, tell us how to solve it." They just kind of wanted us to tell them how to do it, tell them how to solve it, tell them how to create the plan. Now, it comes more from them. It has been a great thing for us.

Bruce, who at the time of the interview was the current middle school principal at Anderson, has seen teachers who take charge and present their own ideas to administration, and while he struggles to place exactly how to attribute getting to that point, he is thankful that the culture exists. Describing one such example, he states:

I have a language arts teacher that said "I want to go to (another local school district) to observe their grading practices." She took it upon herself. I don't know who – nobody approached her about it, she approached me, and she ended up going there. She made the contacts. So, to me, that's a clear example of somebody who's being a leader, knowing something else can be done. That's impressive. I guess that comes back to the culture that we have, and a lot of that is from ELI. I don't know if it's the chicken or the egg, or which one came first, but they go hand in hand.

Teachers find responsibility and involvement in their practice to be motivating. Alice, an elementary school teacher at Anderson, talked about how the collaboration and working with other teachers has been exciting. She states "I think that's what gears me toward wanting to do other things. If I see other people trying it and their excitement builds, then I'm like 'Hey- I want to try this' and bring it back to my building."

At the high school level in Anderson, Charlie, who teaches high school science, has seen teachers more willing to try more things as well, creating opportunities for students and staff that would not have been available otherwise. This is has been true for teachers whether they have been part of the ELI core team or not. Charlie speaks of a teacher in his school who had moved from the classroom into a technology role. Though placed in that position administratively, she has embraced that role and taken it beyond expectations through volunteer efforts, creating a wi-fi zone in the outside court area where teachers could take students to work. She incorporated landscaping to make it a nice welcoming environment where learning could take place instead of inside of the traditional classroom.

Within Harbor Valley school district, elementary school teacher Ellen reported that "there have been more opportunities for teachers to step up, but I don't know that teachers will necessarily ask for that opportunity." Elementary principal, Laura, however, had a different perspective in their school, describing that she has had a lot of teachers stepping up and wanting to share best-practices with others, regardless of whether they were ELI members. She relates

a story that made a big impression on her, exemplifying how teachers take on the

perspective of working to better the practice of the entire system rather than

simply their own independent functioning, characterized by an individual in a

stage five level of concern.

> When we began to think about Read Across America and wanted to do a fund-raiser, which sounds like so much of an "add-on," we wanted to read and make the focus on literacy. The Title I math teacher came to the meeting and I'm thinking "What is she doing here? This is a Read Across America project and the math teacher is here." I mean that in a positive way. Man, I'm glad she's here… and this is a teacher who is four months away from retiring. She could have sat in her office. I said (to her) "What do you suggest?" She said, "Well, I'm sitting here thinking and we could do graphing, and we can have the older kids count the money and the younger kids count the books. Then we can make comparisons and we can make charts. That is teacher leadership. That's how I can take what I'm an expert at and work with kids, and work with teachers, and it becomes a building level initiative.

> An additional perspective is given by Francis, a former elementary

classroom teacher who now specializes in gifted education at the elementary

level in Harbor Valley. She cites that more teachers have initiated more

leadership opportunities since becoming involved with ELI, but have been able to

do so because of the framework that has been established for them to do so

administratively. Whereas teachers may have sought to share best practices on

their own in the past, they are now able to on a more wide scale basis as

administrators have asked them to. Francis states:

> Okay, would they have emerged and said "I'm going to hold a workshop on using the SMART board on their own?" No. Would they have helped their team if their team wanted help on the SMART Board? Yes. Because, I did that informally with teachers who saw me using it, wanted help, and I said "Sure." That wasn't a formal workshop where fifteen teachers came and listened. So, yes, I think there have been teachers emerging as leaders because of ELI, because of being organized, because of administrators asking them to.

She then went on to talk about how some of the practices initiated by teacher groups had gone on to be supported by principals, even having them ask if they could join in:

> We've had book clubs where somebody would say "Why don't we pick a professional research-based book on differentiated instruction, read it, and meet each month at Panera?" That's totally not from administration. Administration saw us doing it and said "Wait a minute. Let's do it formally and get Act 48 credits for it. You guys should be getting Act 48 credits for doing this and still have it be informal. Let's meet at Panera or somebody's house, but let's give you Act 48 for it and can we come too?"

Formal vs. Informal Leadership

Often when looking at roles that teacher leaders assume, there are differing perspectives on what exactly a teacher leader looks like. While some may focus on the roles that have titles associated with them, such as department head, mentor, grade level leader, coach, or committee member, others look instead to instructional practice and what may take place on a day-to-day basis within the classroom. The distinguishing between whether a teacher is taking on a leadership role or is simply being delegated duties by a building administrator can confuse the issue even more greatly.

It is important to note that the intent of the interview format was to gauge the perceptions of the participants, using an open-ended format that would not prompt the respondent to distinguish between formal or informal roles. On the contrary, the intent was to gain insight as to what first comes to mind for teachers and principals when discussing the roles which teacher leaders may fill.

The existence of informal leadership was recognized by principals, not just as it currently exists within their district but also that it was present before district

involvement in ELI. Anderson High School principal Adam talks about his experiences with teachers who may not officially be titled as a leader, but exhibits leadership qualities:

> Some folks would like to assume teacher leadership roles but aren't asked to do so, and maybe informally take on a role. I can think of one person in particular that is very knowledgeable about data and statistics. For a period of time I never really spoke to him about anything, (such as) serving on a committee. He was kind of informally doing some things that wasn't getting quote-unquote formal recognition, but informally was doing a lot of work to help out the staff.

Similarly, Charles, an Anderson high school teacher, talks about how some individuals will only seek roles that have a formal recognition or some form of compensation attached to them, while many simply act without concern about being recognized as a leader:

> A lot of people, they want to see that title as a leader. There are others, though, that know they are leading and they don't have a title or money involved with it. We have a gentleman down the hall who was doing research for one of his classes and went out to other districts and helped bring the curriculum mapping here. He doesn't consider himself a teacher leader, but he did something that led to change within our district. A lot of people around here still think you have to have a formal title, but that's slowly changing with the ability to go to the retreats, leadership academies, and everything else. Now they're seeing I don't have to be a department chair to be a leader. I can just be myself and lead in other ways.

Teacher leadership can informally be exhibited by teachers who help others to recognize their leadership traits and encourage them to share with others the best practices that they use. Barbara, elementary classroom teacher at Anderson, discusses this as a role that teacher leaders should fill in schools:

> You are a leader in that you might notice that someone has a really great idea and they're not sharing it. You might be a leader by saying to them "This is a really great idea what you are doing in your room. You need to share this with other people", kind of prompting them to look at it a little

differently. Sometimes people are afraid to share things, not realizing that it is a great idea, and being a leader in your school by recognizing that. Being able to say to someone else "You should really share that, I think it would help."

Harbor Valley elementary reading specialist Donna describes a critical function of teacher leadership that often occurs informally as sharing expertise and best practices with peers, including veteran teachers helping new teachers to grow. She sates:

> I think that teachers should be mentors. The teachers that have been here for a couple of years should be mentors to the new teachers coming in and teach them maybe about not only classroom things, but also dynamics with getting along with others and things like that. I think also that teachers should share. If they are an expert in some area they should share with their peers without acting like they're the best at it. Be able to share ideas and teachers can be able to take what they want from that and implement in their own classroom.

One of the Harbor Valley elementary principals, Laura, spoke of how teacher leadership became more formalized once ELI came into practice:

> Before we even had ELI we had elementary curriculum committees, we had grade level committees, we had teacher leadership in many ways. We had teachers training other teachers, teachers planning parent nights. So, there was a lot of input in leadership. Early in the process when we introduced ELI to our teachers, that was the first thing we said. We already have teacher leaders. This isn't a new concept at (Harbor Valley). We have leaders, here's what our leaders do, and we recognized them in many ways at many levels. The culture of leadership was already there outside the classroom. So, it was like "Oh, okay, here's just another way to work on our leadership and formalize it.

Formal titles such as department head or head teacher are present at both Anderson and Harbor Valley. The use of head teachers, grade level leaders, and department chairs have been in practice in both districts long before the existence of ELI, and continue to function still.

The Harbor Valley elementary schools utilize a head teacher in each of their elementary schools. This formalized role designates duties that are along the line of delegated authority rather than creating new initiatives or opportunities for growth. Principal Laura details duties of the head teacher being, in part, "getting the kids on the bus when the principal isn't there, go into the cafeteria when the principal isn't there, handle discipline problems when the principal isn't there." She does also state, however, that the head teacher can also be used as a sounding board, where the principal may seek out advice on how to handle a decision or think through the consequences of a particular practice.

Professional Development

One of the largest response themes that was indicated when examining respondent interview transcripts in both Anderson and Harbor Valley school districts was how teacher leaders are used as a major component of professional development within their school systems. This practice is a theme widely supported by ELI, encouraging teachers to share best practices not only within districts, but across districts as well. As part of a distributed approach, and the recognition that individuals have specific or specialized areas of expertise that contribute to the overall success of the system, teacher leaders take advantage of opportunities to share what has helped make them successful in order to help others grow.

The elementary principals at Harbor Valley attribute much of the student performance success of recent years to the efforts of teachers planning and

presenting during in-service days. Helen, one of the Harbor Valley elementary

principals, describes this practice:

> In our district over the last five years or so we've been utilizing a lot more of our own teachers to kind of share their ideas. It's been something that has been very effective and very well-received, but I think it's because it's not just "let's sit down and talk," because they'll talk about anything. It's very structured, but they came up with that structure. They were part of planning the day and also showing and demonstrating the strategies they want to share.

Teachers are not limited to sharing best practices on specific in-service

days, but Helen also describes how she had used one particular teacher to help

support other teachers at a particular grade level, creating a sustainable initiative

due to that teacher's efforts.

> I had been talking to teachers about flexible grouping and what that really meant, and I had a couple of grade levels doing close to what flexible grouping is, but not really everything. I just talked to her a couple of times and she went out and figured out how exactly it should look like and she kind of took the lead in that grade level in terms of implementing flexible grouping properly…There's really only one of that original team left, but that grade level is still doing flexible grouping and doing it the way they should be doing it because of her leadership. I think that it's not just passing on information, it's really good information. It's data-based, research-based, and that you're able to have a good rapport with your teammates to pass along a good strategy. It's also being able to have a lasting effect. Even if you're not there anymore, the really good strategy continues because you were such a force in making it happen.

Donna and Ellen, both elementary teachers in Harbor Valley, share the

same perspective on how teachers are a critical part of professional development

in their school. Document analysis confirms that teachers not only have been a

big part of the agenda on professional development days, but also have been

responsible for sharing district best practices with other districts, such as ELI

Regional Learning Academies, where several districts may gather to discuss best

practices. During these sessions, Harbor Valley teams have shared with other districts their practices on developing a district-wide mission statement and developing a "Second Chance" program that permits students to additional options to demonstrate proficiency. Donna also discusses how opportunities are not limited to formal in-service, but that teachers should "be able to share ideas and teachers can take away what they want from that and implement it in their own classroom."

In Anderson school district, teacher-led sessions are also evident on in-service and inter-district agendas. Elementary classroom teacher Alice shared her experiences attending workshops outside of the district, then reporting back what she had learned during grade-level meetings or during professional development days. Such opportunities are valued not only by those who are afforded the opportunity to attend the workshops, but also by those who benefit from the experience and learning of others.

Teachers as Administrative Liaisons

The school day in a typical school building is incredibly busy and filled with activity. Time is a valued commodity, and it often comes at a premium to both teachers and principals. Communication between principals and teachers can be difficult on a large scale basis, and a role cited by teachers and principals that is often assumed by teachers is to act as a liaison between their colleagues and the building principal. An individual who takes such a role may do so in a formal or informal manner, and is able to facilitate communication in a two-way manner.

Anderson elementary teacher Barbara describes how grade level

representatives are utilized in this manner, stating:

> If our principal has something that needs to be said to the actual grade, she sends it to you and then you just send it on. It's more of a liaison. I don't know if it's really making any decisions because you go back to the group, you ask them what they think, you discuss it and kind of work it out that way, then take your response back to the principal. So, I think it was just given that way as a means of disseminating information that just gets to specific grades.

On a broader scale, teachers may act as administrative liaisons by helping

develop the mission and vision of the district. Anderson uses summer retreats

that combine both administrators and teachers to look ahead to the upcoming

year, determine what the focus will be, and what steps will be necessary to get

there. Middle school principal Bruce describes as follows:

> We have an administrative retreat every summer that we take administrators and teacher leaders, too. At that retreat we kind of plan out and look at how we did in the last year. We look at needs assessment that's basically a survey that goes out to each teacher about how we did and what they want or need for the following year. So, we look at all that and we come up with goals for the following year. Those are the main areas that we put things into – our curriculum mapping, the technology, the student success kind of area and re-structuring. It kind of lends itself or is an organizational structure for teacher leadership.

He then later goes on to discuss how teachers may serve as leaders not

only by helping to create the vision, but also to share the vision with others so

that it may come to fruition:

> One thing we're working on with the help of our ELI liaison is governance and looking at structure and communication and how if we talk about certain things at a team meeting, how it gets communicated out to the curriculum and instruction committee, and the building level, making sure that everybody, not just the teacher leaders who are involved on those committees, but everybody in the buildings hears the same message and is at least on the same page. I think that is one thing. We have a lot of people who are involved, and sometimes we take for granted that all of the

teachers are hearing the same message. Do you know what I mean? I'm not sure what person said it but, sometimes you've got to turn around and make sure when you're leading up the hill, sometimes you've got to turn around and make sure everyone is following you. I know there is a group of teacher leaders that are definitely following, but I think if you look further back behind them to make sure the other group is behind them I guess is the way to look at it.

Support of Teacher Leaders

The second one-legged conference question was "How can teachers be supported to effectively serve as teacher leaders?" Responses were coded as in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Response Coding Regarding Supporting Teacher Leaders

		Stage of Concern						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teacher	District							
Alice	Anderson						X	
Barbara	Anderson				X			
Charles	Anderson				X			
Donna	Anderson				X			
Ellen	Harbor Valley				X			
Francis	Harbor Valley				X			
Administrator	District							
Adam	Anderson			X	X		X	
Bruce	Anderson						X	
Connie	Anderson				X		X	
Doug	Anderson				X		X	
Helen	Harbor Valley					X	X	
Laura	Harbor Valley						X	

When discussing supports for teacher leaders, many of the participants, whether serving as a teacher or building administrator, focused their response within the realm of Stage 3 – Management. The themes that were coded had a strong relation to the time and resources that are afforded to teachers to be able to appropriately prepare and collaborate with one another to accomplish their roles. Compensation in terms of money is not discussed in the one-legged

conference format, though a follow-up question seeks input in this regard. Instead, teacher and administrators focus on the availability of conference attendance, trainings, or schedules conducive to teacher collaboration in order to support teacher leadership practice.

The Stage 5 – Collaboration emphasis seen as coded for principal responses is centered on empowering teachers and valuing their input when determining the initiatives that will shape school practice. Allowing teachers to share their relative strengths with one another and work together. The Stage 2 – Personal response of secondary principal Adam was based on teacher concerns about stepping forward to lead based on them not always viewing themselves as a leader.

The themes that emerged while coding the responses to questions regarding the supports of teacher leadership as discussed in the following sections, as follow-up questions were used to provide greater depth and insight to the one-legged conference question posed to each participant.

Administrative Support of Teacher Leadership

From an administrative perspective, much of what administrators themselves can do in order to support teacher leadership is based simply on recognizing and valuing the input of teachers when it is given. By truly incorporating them into leadership practice, teachers are able to be empowered and part of the decision-making team as it will affect real issues in their building or district.

Harbor Valley elementary principal Laura says:

I think a lot of it goes back to motivation. They chose to be leaders, because they want, I believe, to do what's best for kids. I think to value their decisions is one way to support them. To value their input and decisions and build a team of people who make decisions, that's really what supports them.

At Anderson, high school principal Adam reaffirms the need to recognize teachers for their leadership efforts, and increase their motivation because of the direct impact they can have on student performance and the climate of the school. Such recognition must be genuine, however, and done in a sincere manner where teachers truly know they are appreciated. It is the little things that can also make a difference.

I, like everyone, like the proverbial pat on the back. It has to be genuine. I think that sometimes we do it and it's not perceived as genuine because its maybe blanket statements that we make to teachers. For instance, we had a really good run with our PSSAs this year and I don't know if people will personally feel responsible if we just make a blanket statement to everyone. I think when you see teachers try to do things as much as you can use quick notes or email to give people the feeling that it's being noticed or not going unrecognized.

Bruce, the middle school principal at Anderson, again talks about valuing the input of teachers as one of the main ways to support teacher leadership. By remaining open to new ideas and considering their plans on how to approach a problem or situation, the organization can benefit from allowing those teachers, who are in the trenches, to move forward with their problem solving approaches. This practice supports a distributed approach to leadership within a system, but can only happen when the administrative team permits such practice to occur.

I guess when it comes down to it, when they come with an idea, when they come with any kind of initiative or idea, that you let it happen. You don't squash it. You don't say "No, no." You have to embrace it. I guess

it's more of a distributive leadership model more rather than a top-down. I think some of that comes from your leaders; your principal and assistant principal and how they act. I think it starts with the superintendent and how they start that culture, but it is also, I think, making sure that you recognize who's responsible. Give credit where credit is due. We do a pretty good job of celebrating that, so it kind of reinforces the culture.

Such validation helps to motivate teachers to continue toward leadership roles or initiatives. Being able to interact on a different level with building administrators, and feeling more that they will be accepted can go a long way in supporting teachers goals, though building trust takes time. Harbor Valley teacher Francis states:

I guess we didn't realize before that the administrators were real people. They were the boss. Then we started having meetings where they let us talk. At first you were real careful about what you said. You didn't want to say anything wrong or have it held against you. There were times when I could tell it wasn't in line with the philosophy and I could tell they were kind of given a little bit of a look or "no." But, they were willing to hear you out or say "yes, I realize that's going to be a concern, but this is our goal. This is where we're going with it so try to get on board." Then conversations became more like "I really like this philosophy, but honestly from a teacher's perspective here are the obstacles. How can we help teachers through these obstacles?" and they were like, "Oh, we didn't realize that."

Ellen, who is also an elementary teacher at Harbor Valley, believes that teachers are made to be part of the decision-making process by administrators, and that principals ask what the teachers believe is important or what they would like to know more about. The fact that principals show a genuine concern and interest in what teachers value is a strength listed by both school districts in what supports teacher leadership practice in taking place.

When principals make teachers comfortable, they are more willing to step forward, as Anderson elementary teacher Barbara notes:

I have noticed over the years that some people are starting to feel a little more comfortable with stepping up to the plate. I think our administration, actually, because they are young and they are very comfortable to work with, that more people are stepping up because they don't feel intimidated. They don't feel like they're going to make a mistake or that they have to have a Ph.D. to stand up there and teach something. I think a lot of people are more comfortable with taking leadership roles and understanding that they're not tooting their own horn. They're just helping us to become better at what we're already doing.

Involvement in ELI was credited in some cases with helping administrators promote a mindset of collaboration and a distributed leadership approach. Harbor Valley elementary principal Laura cites how involvement in the organization has helped the principals help the teachers to understand their leadership roles and focus on the fact that they are leaders. The premise that teachers have a leadership capability by nature promotes leadership practice in taking place.

Teachers Supporting Teacher Leadership

There were several similarities in how respondents perceived teachers could support other teachers to serve as leaders based on their own experience. The central theme in this regard seemed to focus on the basis of trust and the openness to listening to one another. As teachers value the input and leadership practice of one another, teacher leadership can grow and thrive within a system.

Anderson principal Doug discusses how once teachers realize the intent of those willing to step forward, teachers who are acting as leaders may feel more comfortable and willing to provide input or share best practices with others:

I think that the colleagues have to just realize that when people are just stepping up to lead they are supporting them to lead and allowing that to happen because they aren't trying to take over. Here I think the people know that when people are trying to lead they are aware of this learning community, they are (Anderson) school district that believes everyone has a say in this.

At Harbor Valley, elementary teacher Francis states how teachers simply being respectful of one another can help others be more willing to share best practices with one another and take the initiative to stand amongst their peers to share their ideas and what they find is working in their classrooms. Elementary principal Laura echoes those beliefs, and discusses how praise and a positive reception from peers can often go further than recognition from a principal or other administrator.

> I can tell them they're doing a great job. The superintendent can tell them that they're doing a great job. Okay, you've done a magnificent job in creating this workshop and demonstrating these skills, but when they see their peers… Take for example through ELI we've done a lot of teacher-planned, directed, and implemented in-services. Our in-services have been almost all teacher-led. That's all great and we write them wonderful thank you notes, but when they have teachers that they presented to emailing them back saying "I've tried this idea but I've hit this snag." Or, "I really liked this but this is a snag I had." That's where the motivation comes from. "Wow, somebody's taking my hard work. I've shared it and they're using it.

Once teachers get that feeling and share their experience with others, it can become contagious. Getting over the first time of presenting to colleagues or opening one's classroom doors to allow others to observe may be difficult, but as it becomes more of a practice one is put at ease. Situations such as learning walks, where colleagues may observe one another's classrooms and list the best practices they observe are a great way to encourage teachers to learn from one another. Harbor Valley elementary teacher Ellen talks about this practice as it has occurred in her building, and the value for teachers who participate.

> Thinking of the learning walks, people get nervous and at first when they hear you're going to have fifteen people walk into your classroom and observe the lesson, they get nervous. It's like "Oh my gosh, what am I

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going to do?" They do it, and you see it and are like "It was wonderful. What were you nervous about?"I learned something and everybody learned something from it. I feel like some people that are really good at what they do don't feel like they are as good as they are.

Helping teachers to recognize what they are good at and where their strengths lie is another way teachers can support teacher leadership. At Anderson, elementary teacher Barbara shares how teachers in her building encourage each other to provide support, saying "You're really strong at this, this is what you need to be doing." A line is not present dividing who is a leader and who is not, so they are comfortable asking each other for help. Anderson principal Connie supports this perspective as well, sharing how teachers in her building may never want to be recognized formally as a leader, but are comfortable in supporting those who move forward or sharing ideas informally to boost the overall program.

At Harbor Valley, elementary principal Helen shared how once one of her teachers came forward to share ideas more formally in in-service or professional development situations, however, it provided an example that made others more comfortable to share their ideas as well. Though she may not have been directly encouraging others to present, the example that she set was a support that allowed teacher leadership to flourish.

It was a very positively displayed kind of thing that she was doing, so teachers kind of thought "Oh, well, if she can do it I can do it too because I have a good idea." So, it kind of spread that way.

Provision of Time

Having the time to be able to lead was a clear theme for both teachers and principals in both districts as a means of supporting teacher leadership. Teachers often have a very structured schedule during the day, and while current economic conditions have caused many teachers to take on larger class sizes or expanded roles, time during the contracted work day may become even more scarce. While teachers have demonstrated a willingness to help lead professional development, collaborate with peers, and serve on various committees, there is a time element associated that is necessary in order to prepare, plan, and serve the school with fidelity.

At Harbor Valley, where a primary role of teacher leaders has been identified as leading professional development and being a focal point of in-service agendas, teachers are thankful for how the administration has supported them with time. Elementary teacher Francis shares:

> We felt so supported in ELI because anytime the administrators would ask us to lead an in-service, do a workshop, or whatever it would be, have a walkthrough…they gave us time to plan. Bring in a half-day sub or stay after school and we'll give you the hourly rate just to get your ideas together so it's not all on your own time.

Another Harbor Valley elementary teacher, Donna, echoes the necessity for time to not only prepare to share ideas with colleagues, but also for those colleagues to be available to visit the classrooms of those who are willing to open their doors for the learning walks that have become part of the culture at Harbor Valley. As she states, "you need to have administrators who will let you get some

subs in to be able to do that. I think it's worth the time to see what (other

teachers) are doing in their classroom."

At Anderson, where teacher involvement in curriculum writing has been a

big initiative for teachers, high school principal Adam talked about the importance

of freeing up teachers to focus on aligning curriculum, and interaction among

department members was observed as part of the process.

> I think that one of the things we really worked hard to do was to give
> people time to further the initiative. In particular the curriculum mapping
> and diary mapping that we're doing takes a lot of time. We didn't think it
> was fair to give people no time to do them and expect people to do it in
> their evening hours or before school hours. We really wanted to devote
> time to get them subs so they could sit down as a department and
> collaborate and talk about things going on in their department. We thought
> we were going to get more bang for our buck to do that. This past year we
> afforded them a day every nine weeks to do that, which from a financial
> standpoint from the district was an undertaking, but gave people a lot of
> time to get through the things they needed to get to.

Barbara, while teaching in the elementary level at Anderson, provided very

similar comments to Adam, noting how teachers value the time afforded to them

to complete the curriculum mapping projects.

> I think a lot of times people don't want to do leadership roles because
> there is not enough time. Whether there's something they have to prepare
> for an in-service. They may need some additional school time. I'll just give
> you an example. Some people were asked to take on a leadership role by
> piloting our curriculum mapping. It's a very large task that we're doing and
> a lot of us who signed on thought that we would have more time, and we
> really were not given that for numerous reasons. It was nothing that
> administration was doing with the intent of not giving us the time, but I
> think more people would be willing to pilot things, do the mapping, if they
> thought that like "yes, I can take one day every nine weeks and reflect on
> what I'm doing and put it into our computer system, and make it a working
> document." I think time is really the biggest thing. Not so much even
> money. I think that it's the time and support that the teachers who are
> doing the leadership roles needed.

While time in general emerged as a major theme with regard to the support of teachers amongst participants, more specifically common planning time was said to be valued in order for teacher leaders to be able to get the job done.

At Anderson, secondary teacher Charles noted how the time built in to the work day where teachers could meet by department or grade level plays a big role in helping teachers to share ideas with one another, something that doesn't need to be led by a principal.

> We have a half hour morning time everyday where we can use that time for professional development. We can meet with other staff members about curriculum stuff. We can collaborate about extracurricular stuff. We may have department meetings. Sometimes it is a time where we may gather as a building and the principal has somebody who may want to teach us something on the promethean board or some other technology. That's them sharing their expertise and leading instead of an administrator.

At the elementary level, Alice also talks about how teachers value the ability to interact with one another, whether to share ideas or provide support to one another when they need a boost.

> The nice thing is, like I said, we have that common plan. So even if it's at the end of the week and we're just re-hashing "I have this lesson where I could not…" You know, that sort of thing. Just having that opportunity to meet makes a big difference. Because, you're a community and you pick each other up when you're down, or if you're frustrated it's just somebody else can say "look at it this way."

Harbor valley elementary principal Helen recognizes how teachers value the common plan time at her school, and how that is a priority when designing the schedule for the instructional day. Common plan time facilitates team-building, and allows teachers to view student performance from a perspective

that extends beyond their four classroom walls, and she believes districts need to

commit to providing this time if they want a collaborative approach to thrive.

> That's really the big leap that I see districts falling short in and it doesn't go much farther for teachers then. So, I think that we changed the elementary periods and gave them common planning periods. We gave them time to talk to each other. I met with them, and I would a few years ago, when we had money, bring in a substitute teacher for that teacher and have a teacher go into other grade levels planning time and talk about their experience. I think that you create structures that allow them to go further and to lead each other in a direction that ultimately is going to be the best for kids in those classes. I had also pointed out that although a third grade teacher only went so far with flexible grouping, she took ownership of that grade level and made it, and that's a very big part of flexible grouping across a grade level. That everybody feels like these 102 students across a grade level belong to all of us. It's not just the 23 in my room, the 24 that are in your room, and the 26 that are in your room. It's all 102 of them and we're here for all of them.

Provision of Resources

While time is certainly necessary in order for teachers to take on additional

roles or challenges, it is often that time does not suffice to get the job done and

additional resources are necessary. The teachers in this study report that

teachers are much more willing to step forward in leadership roles when they are

provided the resources they need in order to get the job done.

Teachers such as Charles, at Anderson high school, recognize that in

current economic times, funding can be tight to purchase extra technology or

materials, but appreciates the fact that his administrators are willing to help

whenever they can.

> Depending on the technologies available, often times you couldn't do (something you would like) because although we have a lot of technology in our schools, there are still things that you may need. If the money is available I know our administrators are willing to get it.

Francis also feels the support of her administrators at Harbor Valley regarding the provision of resources, and was initially amazed at just how accommodating her administrative team was for those who were willing to lead professional development or other workshops.

> Allocating resources so if I'm going to do a workshop, is somebody going to get me my SMART board, my projector, the things I'm going to need, and they were right there writing it all down. What can we get you? What do you need? I think they understand that they're saving money by having their own teachers share the wealth, and not bringing in some presenter that's going to come in, and in the past we're like "snooze-fest." Are you kidding me? We know how to do this, we learned it six years ago. This guy had nothing new to offer. I think we found that we have the knowledge, we just have to spread it so it's not just one pod doing it, one team, or one grade level. I think they've realized the people they have are valuable, and they will do what they need to do to support us. That's been very clear. I don't think people would be willing to do it the next time if they weren't supported. I wouldn't. If I wasn't getting time or having the things available to me to make it successful, then I would probably say no the next time. It's just too much work.

As Francis notes, while districts do incur expenses by purchasing materials for teacher presentation, they often actually save money by not contracting outside presenters for in-service. Taking advantage of the know-how and expertise of the district staff can pay large dividends not only monetarily, but from buy-in and cooperation from the rest of the staff.

Compensation

It was unanimous among participants that compensation in terms of money was largely non-existent when it comes to assuming informal leadership roles. Those that serve as department heads or head teachers for their buildings do receive an extra stipend, but as far as serving on committees or leading in-service there is no additional pay per se. At times teachers may be given a

contractual hourly rate for writing curriculum or preparing for an in-service presentation, but this additional payment has not evolved since their districts have become involved in ELI. The initial core team meeting, though, when districts first joined ELI was held in the summer, and teachers were given a small stipend through ELI, as was recalled by those team members who were present.

As Charles notes, however, many teachers who are willing to serve as leaders are not concerned about monetary compensation. When discussing participation in district vision meetings in the summer, he notes:

> I know we weren't compensated for being there, it was just a voluntary thing. We weren't given comp time or money. To be honest, I don't think it's necessary. If you're going to be a teacher leader then be a teacher leader.

While monetary compensation was not identified as available for teachers, principals and teachers did cite the ability to attend out of conference workshops as a form of compensation, as well as the affording of time and resources in the previous two sections. This acknowledgement confirms some of the perspectives of the participants, recognizing that compensation may take place in different forms, which may be valued as much if not more than money.

Anderson school district does use a form of compensation at the end of each year through a program called "Pass It On." The elementary principals describe how this program is run by the teaching staff, and they will vote among their colleagues for award recipients such as Innovator of the Year, Technology Integrator of the Year, or other similar titles. The winners will receive a small prize, which could be a gift card to a store or some form of gift basket. Aside from the physical prize, the recognition for the accomplishments of peers goes a long

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way to help promote teacher leadership and encourage teachers to go beyond their traditional roles or expectations.

School Culture

Much of the credit toward supporting teacher leadership by the interview participant is given toward the culture and atmosphere that exists within their school buildings and district at large. The openness to collaboration and validation of teacher input in turn generates more enthusiasm for leadership to emerge. Just as Spillane (2005) recognizes that distributed leadership must be a practice in schools, not simply an event that occurs in specific situations, so too do those teachers and principals share that perspective. It is the fact that such a culture of shared leadership practice exists within the schools and districts as reported by the participants in this study, and it is valued as such.

Helen, as an elementary principal in Harbor Valley, emphasizes the importance of their school district's philosophy and backing it up by supporting teachers on a consistent basis.

> Probably the most important thing, is the philosophy of the district as a whole. I think that our philosophy here is about differentiation and collaboration and doing whatever it takes to make kids successful. Lots of districts have that philosophy that all kids can learn and we work really hard to do that. I think that having that belief and saying that as your philosophy is a very different thing if you don't have the structures in place to make that happen. You can say you believe something all you want, and sound really great, but unless you put structures in place to support that for teachers, there's no way that belief is going to play itself out in classrooms everyday.

Doug, serving as an elementary principal at Anderson, states a similar belief regarding how the culture promotes leadership, which may or may not be attributed directly to participation in ELI from his perspective. He looks at the

qualities of the teaching staff and administrators in shaping a distributed practice, stating:

> The culture allows it to happen because of the collegial nature of our staff and even our administration. I'm not saying that it is because of ELI or it's not because of ELI. I'm just saying that it's the culture that allows it to happen.

Connie, who had been a teacher at Anderson prior to becoming an elementary principal, has been able to trace how the culture has supported teacher leadership practice and the evolvement of ELI.

> That really started from the top down and a lot of it started with ELI a couple superintendents ago that really got us into the mix of that. It really, really started there. I have to say that when I started out as a teacher here, there were minimal opportunities to be in a leadership role. You took on your supplemental – yearbook and that sort of thing. People saw you doing those different things, but I have to say ELI really supported that. That's more comfortable being with, being more receptive to teachers' ideas and thoughts and really bringing them on as part of the team. That really is a benefit. It's still going. It's had its peaks and valleys for a little bit, and I think that a lot of Colleague in Residence that you get is really a key factor in ELI because we have _____ and she's always bringing us back to "what is your governance model" and those kinds of things. Really structuring things so that it's not just a "yeah, we did that for five years and now we're on to something else," but "how do we sustain that." I feel like we have. I really do.

The teachers at Anderson who were interviewed talk about how the culture has made them feel more open to sharing with one another and supporting each other to try new things. Veteran teachers and younger teachers collaborate to incorporate technology in their classrooms, and have no inhibitions allowing each other into their rooms. Elementary teacher Barbara shares the story of incorporating the purchase of Promethean interactive white boards in the classrooms at their school.

Some of the older teachers were like "What do you mean I'm not going to have a chalkboard?" You know, you've been teaching for seventeen years and you like your chalkboard. Some of the younger teachers were really helpful in just saying "I'll stay after school and we can just play around with it and see what happens." Now, everybody feels comfortable with it. Some of the older teachers who got their Promethean boards started feeling very comfortable, and when the younger teachers started getting theirs they were saying "I've been working on it for a while. You can come up. You can watch me while I'm teaching." Very open door policy. "You can come in while I'm teaching to see how it works with the kids. We can stay after school."

When collaboration, shared decision-making, and learning from one another is an expectation, and not a forced or foreign activity, a distributed approach is established and allows teachers to blossom in their leadership abilities, typically in an informal manner.

Obstacles to Teacher Leadership

The third interview question used for the purpose of simulating a one-legged conference was "What obstacles exist to teacher leadership?" Coding of participant responses are displayed in Table 4 below:

Table 4

Response Coding Regarding Obstacles to Teacher Leadership

		Stage of Concern						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teacher	**District**						X	
Alice	*Anderson*			X				
Barbara	*Anderson*				X			
Charles	*Anderson*				X			
Donna	*Harbor Valley*			X	X			
Ellen	*Harbor Valley*			X			X	
Francis	*Harbor Valley*			X			X	
Principal	**District**							
Adam	*Anderson*			X		X		
Bruce	*Anderson*			X				
Connie	*Anderson*			X				
Doug	*Anderson*	X						
Helen	*Harbor Valley*	X		X				
Laura	*Harbor Valley*		X	X				

The obstacles to teacher leadership as widely described by the participants in this study relate mainly on the impact of teacher leadership on relationships between teachers, and colleagues receive the practice of their peers. Stage 2 – Personal responses relate not only to teachers becoming unsure of demand of the innovation, but also to how the actions of teachers affect the dynamic of how they interact with their peers. Both teachers and principals recognize this as a primary theme with regard to how obstacles may hinder teacher leadership and a distributed leadership culture within schools.

Responses of principals also ranged all the way into Stage 0 – Awareness and Stage 1 – Informational coding. These statements by two of the principals detailed how some teachers are just unwilling to share, and would rather keep to themselves rather than participate in leadership practice. While they still may have a concern with student achievement, they have no interest in becoming involved with the overall culture and practice being established within the building.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, two of the teachers also had portions of their response coded within the Collaboration label associated with Stage 5. These responses focused on teacher interactions, focusing on the importance of teacher interaction and its necessity to effectively be facilitated for the district to accomplish its goals.

Teacher responses also brought forth a theme relating to Stage 3 – Management, based heavily on the fact that time is so difficult to find to extend professional practice beyond what occurs in their classroom. These teachers

recognize that the ability to perform certain roles, such as leading professional

development and observing one another's best practices, takes time that is often

not available, along with the funding or technological resources necessary to

support the initiatives they would like to spearhead.

The details of the themes presented through participant responses, as

well as the questions that were used to follow-up and fully seek the perceptions

toward teacher leadership obstacles, are provided in the following sections.

Perceptions of Colleagues

Teachers often struggle to move forward as leaders due to issues with

perception, not only with regard to how other teachers perceive what they are

trying to accomplish, but also to what teacher leadership initiatives, such as ELI

in this case, are really about.

Misunderstandings of what the ELI initiative truly is had been a stumbling

block from the start of the initiative in both schools, but one that could be

resolved with communication. Harbor Valley elementary teacher Ellen talked

about how teachers may feel more comfortable serving as a leader, or working

with teacher leaders, if they had a better recognition of what ELI is.

> I think a lot of teachers don't understand what ELI is. I think there needs to
> be a better understanding of what ELI is and what our roles are serving on
> the ELI team. I think that maybe teachers understand that a little better
> that maybe they would be more open and more receptive to it.

Not having an understanding of ELI, and colleagues not recognizing the

intent of what they were trying to do by sharing best practices or leading

meetings, created a sense of uneasiness at first for those at Harbor Valley,

reported classroom teacher Donna:

I feel like maybe the first year that I was on ELI we had to be in charge of a meeting, like a common planning meeting. I did not feel comfortable. I felt like I was pushing my ideas on someone else when it really wasn't. It came from an administrator what we were supposed to talk about, but now I think that we're kind of equals now. Yeah, we're on the ELI team and go to ELI meetings, but other people are doing leadership things.

The perception of one's peers can be intimidating to a teacher leader, and while some staff members may be thankful for having "one of their own" representing them, others may view it as someone trying to overstep their role. Anderson elementary teacher Barbara discusses the range of perceptions that one may encounter in this regard.

I think some look at it as they want that person to be in a leadership role because they trust them. They trust that they are doing it for the good of the group, and not just their own. I also think that sometimes some of the people look at them like "brown-nosers", so it's a mixed bag.

Doug notes the perception that teachers should not be leading as an obstacle during his tenure as an elementary principal at Anderson.

The perception that leadership needs to come from administration is an obstacle. The mindset that "this is your (administration's) job, you're the person that should be taking care of this." In my experience toxic people trying to block whatever you do. That's very toxic and may be the number one factor across the board.

At the middle school level, Anderson principal Bruce discussed how he has seen the perception of many teachers toward teacher leadership change in recent years. Instead of teachers believing that others may be trying to show them up, leading to the tall-poppy syndrome discussed previously (Danielson, 2005), those who had held those views have been allowed less of an influence.

I think there's some of the teachers that are further down the hill that don't like some of the other teachers showing them up. They only want to do what they're told to do. What's in their contract, 7 to 3, and then they're done. I'll be honest, and pleasantly I can say from when I started here until now, six years, I've seen less of that. I don't know if that's because of

retirements or staff turnover or those people who were the nay-sayers got beat down. I don't know, but I see less of that then I did when I started. It's a good thing, but I can't also put a finger on it or caused it to go away. I think people just gave up, to be honest, but it's interesting.

Criticism from Colleagues

Following the same line of thought as the previous section on perceptions of teacher leadership, a more specific concern was the criticism that teacher leaders may receive from their colleagues. Such criticism was reported as a major obstacle that prevents teachers from stepping forward and serving as leaders. In both Harbor Valley and Anderson, it was shared that how the manner in which some teachers would react to the leadership efforts of their peers often will inhibit teachers from leading professional development sessions, serving on committees, or interacting with administrators. While it was evident from all participants that the culture in their school buildings and school districts at large is very conducive to teacher leadership practice and a distributed approach, there still remains a small percentage of staff who view those who go beyond traditional practice in a negative light, and are not afraid to make their feelings known.

The teachers who participated in this study indicated their desire simply to have the respect of their peers. Some shared specific negative experiences that they have had while serving their peers in leadership roles. Francis shares this story from earlier in her career as an elementary teacher at Harbor Valley while leading a workshop in her building, and how she was given a bad taste in her mouth due to disrespect from her colleagues.

The very first teacher-led in-service day was a bunch of workshops and I was asked to do one on differentiated instruction. I wanted to really make it something that people could take home and try tomorrow. I didn't want to give them a grandiose idea that would overwhelm them. I didn't want them to roll their eyes like "oh, brother, that's just a dog and pony show." I'm aware, I know what they say in the lunch room – I'm right there. So, I wanted to make it applicable and make it okay, so you're using your manual, looking at your curriculum guide, and here's a way to make vocabulary differentiated. Easy – three levels, easy suggestions, I'm going to give you the stuff, you can do it tomorrow. I tried so hard to not make it something that people were not going to receive well, and I saw eye rolls, the occasional "I'm not going to do that" kind of look on their face, and I remember. I specifically came over to this one particular team that was a large group of nay-sayers and I said you look like you don't like some of this stuff, and that's fine. I just wanted to make it easy. Does this seem like too much? And they were just "You know, really, you'll be here long enough and it will all come back around and all of the sudden this will be like the worst thing you can do, and blah, blah, blah." It made me feel so bad, and made me feel like because I purposely tried to avoid doing things that would get that reaction, and it didn't matter, so I felt like they could at least just try to show respect because I'm your colleague. I was asked to do this by administration. This was not my idea to stand up in front of you and talk about differentiated instruction. If you were asked to speak at a faculty meeting I would not roll my eyes at you, so could you at least just be respectful. So that kind of, once I stepped away from it and once I had my feelings hurt, I thought no, be a respectful colleague and don't be that way. Even if you walk away and say I'm not going to do any of that baloney, fine, but be respectful. Nobody is parading around like they are the know-it-all of the school. By no means. Because, I would say to them I'm not saying any of this is perfect because there's always ways to improve it. There just wasn't a lot of willingness there in that particular group. So that's one thing – be respectful.

Unfortunately for Francis, this was not an isolated incident. Later in the interview discussion regarding obstacles to teacher leadership, she shares a second story about being confronted while leading a session on student assessment and how it almost prevented her from continuing to serve as an in-service presenter.

I remember this one particular meeting and it was the same group of teachers who were not particularly excited with my differentiated instruction. This teacher just flipped out on me. Threw her hands up in the

air said "I don't even believe that you do this. If you say you do it, then I guess you do, but I don't believe that it can work. I don't believe it. It's a crock!"

While such an example may be on the more extreme end of the spectrum, more subtle comments can still be hurtful, and seek to disrupt a culture that has taken years to build. As was discussed in the review of literature, often comments are made to younger teachers from those who are veterans and don't believe they have anything to learn from those who are less-experienced. Alice, as an elementary teacher at Anderson, has felt that struggle.

> I remember a couple of times I went to do an in-service and some older, senior teachers would say "What do you know that you get to present? You're only in your third year of teaching." To not be effected by that and to stick to what you believe in and go with it from there. I'm here to do a job, I'm here to teach, and I'm here to do my job well. Outside of that if people feel like I'm going over the top or volunteering, or getting involved in too much then that's my prerogative and to not be effected by that. That was my hardest struggle I think.

Alice also reported comments alluding to giving allegiance to management rather than her own peers, implying the "brown-noser" perception that her colleague Barbara cited in the previous section.

> Being involved so much at (Anderson), and even in extracurricular activities my older, senior teachers would be like "Oh, sleeping with the district" or things like that. It's never my intention, I just love what I do and think that it shouldn't be separated. So, those are some of the struggles.

Though not directly feeling the pressure, administrators also recognize the effects that negative criticism from peers has on teachers in leadership roles. At Anderson, Connie at the elementary level recognized that "people are concerned with that perception, concerned with 'Why are you always meeting with the administrator?'"

Adam reports a similar observation to Connie, and believes that much of those perceptions are due to jealousy of those who are able to lead. That jealousy may cloak the fact that they really do value the fact that teachers are able and willing to represent the staff and lead in various capacities.

> I think deep down people are envious of people who are able to step out of their comfort zone and do that. I think how that shows up in a formal organization is the "brown-noser" or the person that is "in" with administration. I do informally hear a lot about that. I think that people minimize what people do sometimes verbally, but I think inherently they appreciate it because it betters the organization.

> At Harbor Valley, elementary principal Laura is concerned that teachers who criticize their peers in leadership roles will lose the opportunity to have a voice in the practice of their schools.

> They may criticize the decisions that are made. That concerns me. I try to work on that within the building. I try to work with teachers at that. I say 'This is a person representing you. This is a person who is going to represent, for example grade level ideas, to colleagues and other buildings and make decisions that are going to affect you, so you need to be talking to those people constantly. You need to be sharing ideas and letting your opinion known, so when decisions are made and they come back to you are not disappointed or critical.'

> Helen, also serving at the elementary level in Harbor Valley, confirms the "brown-noser" labeling fear, and how teachers leaders are apprehensive of being labeled a principal's favorite or the "chosen one." Though not accurate, some teachers take the attitude that those who are chosen to lead professional development sessions are favored and that the principal believes that no one else may be working on the same level. This can cause resentment and a rift between those who are asked to present and those who choose not to, or may not have been asked in the first place.

Willingness to Share

There are teachers who are excellent in terms of classroom instruction and have great potential for leadership in terms of what they could share with their colleagues in terms of best practice. However, at times these individuals are unwilling to share their knowledge or expertise with others for a variety of reasons.

At the elementary level, Harbor Valley principal Helen has witnessed teacher reluctance to share first-hand. The fact that she is so adamantly unwilling to share with teachers has even turned off her peers from even trying to learn from her, even though she is perceived as a highly effective teacher.

> I have a couple of really strong teachers in my building and I know one in particular. She goes on her own and does a lot of research and with a lot of good people, not just random people out there. She does a lot, especially with literacy. But, it's difficult to get her to share with other people because, I think she's had some negative experiences to begin with. She didn't start her career in our district, she started somewhere else and then came here, so I think she had some negative experiences. I think also, when I listen to her talk, this one of the very few times I've had a teacher say to me "I did all the reading on this and I figured it out, so if they want to know I'll give them my books, but I'm not going to do it for them." I was really kind of taken aback when she said it in that way to me, because teachers are usually pretty good with each other. Even if they clash on some ideas, they don't really put each other down like that, so it was really pretty surprising. I've never heard of anything like that. But, she is a very strong teacher. She's actually one of the best teachers I've ever seen, not just in this building but in everything I've ever done. She's extremely effective and extremely good with kids. Everything she does is very research-based and she uses her data. Everything that they say you should do, she does in this classroom. She honestly does. I have never heard of anybody who says they don't want to share, but I'm not the only person she's said that to. So now teachers, they don't really care what she's doing. She's the best teacher in the building but nobody really cares, and nobody really wants to go and ask her for help with anything. She would be perfect.

While in the case that Helen had mentioned the teacher may have believed that she did not have a duty to share what she has learned with her peers because they should be responsible for their own learning, others choose not to share because of the potential negative impact on relationship with colleagues or how they may be perceived as discussed earlier. Anderson principal Adam recognizes this as an obstacle, due to the nature of leadership and not being able to please everyone.

> Being willing to step out in front of your peers, that's the biggest thing. Being willing to ruffle some feathers of the people you work with on a collegial basis. I think people still have a difficult time of maybe disagreeing with something but still liking that person or respecting that person. I think it's a lot of conflict types of things. If you look at certain people, some people enjoy conflict and some people don't handle it in a positive way. Some people will avoid it at all costs. Teacher leaders have to be able to manage that in an appropriate way.

Time and Resources

As was noted to a large extent in how teacher leaders could be supported in their efforts, it is then logical that the availability of time and resources must also appear in the analysis of obstacles to teacher leadership. Time, in particular, has traditionally been a challenge in terms of allowing teachers to collaborate and share best practices, and in the current era of increased demands and accountability the challenge has only compounded. Additionally, the economic climate in public education, specifically in Pennsylvania due to budget reductions on a wide scale basis, has limited the access to funding principals may have once had to promote teachers trying new things and incorporating the use of technology in their instruction.

While districts such as Harbor Valley may greatly value the use of learning walks and teachers opening their classrooms to one another to observe best practices, and elementary teacher Donna notes "it takes time out of your classroom to show other people what you're doing in your classroom, and people have to come out of their classroom to see what you're doing." Even the cost of substitutes to free teachers to be out of their rooms during the instructional day can add up quickly, and unfortunately professional development funds may be sacrificed during a budget crunch in order to pay salaries, utilities, and debt service.

As a teacher, the lack of available resources can be an inhibitor from being willing to do "extra" things outside of classroom instruction. At Anderson, secondary teacher Charles notes:

> The money can be an issue if you're planning something where supplies are needed, meals need to be served, or if space needs to be reserved. It's tough because money is not budgeted there and the same applies to resources. If they're not available then you're pretty much stuck and have to make due with what you've got.

Overuse of Teacher Leaders

The obstacle that the same small percentage of individuals in a system end up doing the bulk of the work is one that certainly is not unique to schools or educational institutions, but is a concern nonetheless. Anderson high school principal has observed that "15 to 20 percent of our students do all of the work in this building, and it's probably the same with the staff. These folks, I think, start to burn out." While principals know that they cannot do it all on their own, and promote the culture of distributed leadership, but there can be a tendency to

continually seek out the same persons to take the lead in a given situation, which

can not only lead to burn out, but also negative feelings amongst other staff

members because they are not being asked or their talents are going

unrecognized.

Anderson principal Bruce recognizes that relying on the same staff can be

an easy pattern to fall into, especially when others may not be willing to step up

otherwise, even though they may not initially want to.

> What it comes down to, though, is you always know who your "high flyers"
> are that you can go to, who you can trust, who you know will step up.
> Sometimes you have to resort to them and ask point-blank. "I know you
> have your full course load, and you're involved in 1-2-3 things, but could
> you please help me out with this?" Sometimes you have to do that.

While serving as a secondary teacher at Anderson, Charles reports that

those who are often labeled as leaders or serve in more official roles can become

burned out, and appreciates when principals seek out the efforts of other staff

members. He also recognizes that more people will step forward as the culture

and climate evolves and distributed practice takes hold.

> They don't want to always be contacting the people with titles. They want
> to bring new people in. Right now they've pretty much taken us people
> with titles and burned us out. They want it so they don't have to constantly
> go to the department chair, grade level leader, or committee member.
> They want to be able to go to somebody else and try to get them to buy in
> and do some things. Slowly people are doing it, but it's one of those things
> that will take time. It's a dynamic shift, a change shift, and people in this
> community do not like change. They are resistant to change, so it's going
> to be a slow process.

At Harbor Valley, elementary principal Helen has caught herself falling into

the practice of repeatedly drawing upon the efforts of the same individual, and

determined it was a pattern that needed to end:

It was starting to become a problem because I wanted to share so much of what she did. It got to the point where if we didn't want to bring other people in naturally, we were going to have to force it, because it needed to happen that other people got on board pretty quickly because otherwise it was turning into the one-man show over here. I think sometimes the administration can be a barrier in themselves sometimes in their eagerness to get teachers to collaborate and share. Sometimes you put people on the pedestal so often that people get sick of it. It's like "Yeah, she had a really good idea, but geez-o-man! Do we have to hear everything from her?" So, that was me doing that so I said we have to get some other people here with you. So we did.

Initiative Follow-Through

As teachers view ELI as an initiative that is a particular technique or event, rather than a means to help implement a practice or culture of distributed leadership, they often associate it with so many endeavors that are launched in public education that are labeled as a fad or "flavor-of-the month." Teachers may be hesitant to buy into the leadership efforts of their school due to previous experiences investing time into school initiatives that may go by the wayside one, two, or three years after it begins once funding dries up or the next best thing comes along. Alice, who teaches at an Anderson elementary school, recognizes how this frustration has affected some of her colleagues, particularly those who are more veteran and may have seen initiatives come and go over the course of their careers.

It does get frustrating on the other end because if you initiate something and sometimes we go with the times where if you work really hard at something then in four years we're going to try something else. That's frustrating because you invested in it, you pulled people into it and this following, and everybody's supporting it, and then we're not doing co-teaching next year. So that's frustrating, but you always go with change and again, I feel that as younger teachers come into the field and new teachers come into the field, you sort of lose the negativity.

Anderson principal Adam also has observed how teachers have been slow to get on board with the ELI initiative for the same reasons.

> My teachers look it as a) anything that has an acronym and b)(anything) that is presented to them in a new fashion is looked at as an initiative. One of the knocks on our administrative team historically, and rightfully so as I've seen this, is we are very much like the "one hit wonder." We'll focus on something for a year, maybe two, and then we'll bounce to something else. We never master something. We're the "jack of all trades, master of none" kind of philosophy. We've become more cognizant of narrowing our focus and staying on something for a period of time.

Communicating the mission and purpose of incorporating teacher leadership into a school or school district's everyday practice can be critical to its success and ultimate implementation. Once teachers and principals understand that it is a philosophy, and not a "program", teachers may be more willing to become involved from the onset.

Identification of Teacher Leaders

The final question applying the one-legged conference approach was "How are teachers identified within your school?" Participant responses were coded and displayed in Table 5:

Table 5

Response Coding Regarding Identification of Teacher Leaders

		Stage of Concern						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Teacher	District						X	
Alice	Anderson				X			
Barbara	Anderson					X		
Charles	Anderson						X	
Donna	Harbor Valley						X	
Ellen	Harbor Valley						X	
Francis	Harbor Valley				X	X		
Principal	District							
Adam	Anderson			X	X			
Bruce	Anderson					X		
Connie	Anderson						X	
Doug	Anderson					X		
Helen	Harbor Valley					X		
Laura	Harbor Valley					X		

Both teacher and principal responses were based for the most part in

Stages 4 – Consequence and Stage 5 – Collaboration. Teacher responses were

more heavily clustered in Stage 5, as they tended to associate teacher leaders

with those who are best able to interact with their peers, and facilitate

collaboration in an effective and peaceful manner. Principal responses,

congregating widely in Stage 4, once again were more focused on being

knowledgeable and having the ability to accomplish the end goal of increasing

student achievement.

Secondary principal Adam focused his response in such a way that it was

coded as split between Stage 2 – Personal and Stage 3 – Management, looking

at teacher leader identification as those who are strong and recognize the

immediate impact of their actions on their environment, and while they put the

school in front of themselves are still conscious of the structure that must be put

in place for leadership to occur. Anderson elementary teacher Barbara also had

her response coded in Stage 3, discussing the administrative processes and procedures used to select teachers for formal leadership roles.

The following sections are used to further describe the themes identified through the analysis of participant responses with regard to teacher and principal perceptions with regard to how teacher leaders are identified in their school or district.

Emergence of Teacher Leadership

In the discussion about how teacher leaders are identified within schools, participant responses pointed to teacher leadership being something that truly emerges from the ranks. There are individuals who are willing to step out and take charge of a situation, or to go out on a limb to represent their peers, and those are the individuals who often end up either being formally selected for leadership roles or informally being recognized by their peers or principals. Though it may be through various venues, these teachers have the drive and desire to make a difference.

Anderson secondary teacher Charles noted that those who emerge among their peers as being willing to take additional challenges or extend their practice beyond the classroom are those who are identified as leaders within their building.

> Those who volunteer to lead an activity in their expertise, those are the ones who are going to do it. They display a leadership capability beyond what's in the classroom. They'll bring ideas to the district and you can even tell that they're leaders. They may not say that they're leaders but in meetings they'll say can we try this or do this a different way. Those are the ones you want to pinpoint as leaders. They're thinking about the future, they're thinking vision. So, let's grab up those people and use them as best we can.

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At the elementary level in Anderson, Alice shared her personal experience that because she was outgoing and willing to share with her peers, she felt it helped her colleagues and supervisors to identify her as someone who would make a good part of the ELI core team for her district.

> I'm always willing to share because I'm like, don't re-invent the wheel. I'm a resource queen, I'll find something for you that we'll work together. I think it just emerged from there. I'm not a judgmental person. I'm very easy going so I think that a lot of times admitting that you're struggling with something is difficult as a professional and because I have that passiveness they'll come. They say even in passing that I never make anyone feel bad or that I'm not judging them or anything like that. I'm just like "We'll find a way to pull this up." So, it wasn't anything formal or official, it was just… And now they'll tease, like we're at a faculty meeting. "Go ask (Alice), she has something in her closet" or "She has some kind of game or something to pull out." From there, being picked for ELI, I was one of the first special ed teachers to get picked which is kind of exciting.

Harbor Valley elementary teacher Francis described how she believes in her district that teacher leaders naturally emerge among peers. When identifying leaders, she has seen the selection as being "obvious." Those who want to rise above have the opportunity to do so, and take advantage of that opportunity. "It's a natural thing," she says. "Leaders emerge. If you're not emerging as a leader it's probably because you don't want to be."

Formal vs. Informal Identification

When posing the questions in the interview protocol to the participants, the first discussions of how teacher leaders are identified within their schools did not refer directly to formal or informal roles. While in some cases teachers or principals may have focused on those roles that receive titles such as department head, grade level leader, head teacher, or committee member, in

other cases the responses centered more on those who were leaders in terms of displaying or sharing best practices for instruction. A follow-up line of questioning related to the question of how teacher leaders are identified centered on whether they believe it makes a difference to teachers or principals whether a teacher is given a formal title or not.

A resounding theme among respondents was that those teachers who participate in leadership activities or are recognized by their peers as leaders typically are not concerned with having a label placed on them, or with receiving any formal recognition. Anderson elementary teacher Barbara indicated that teacher leaders are focused on student achievement and doing what's best for kids, and that colleagues recognize the strengths of one another. This allows several individuals to serve in a leadership capacity, truly modeling a distributed practice, as individuals are sought out to lead based on the situation.

> I don't look at leadership, and I don't think a lot of people look at leadership as being a rank, it's more just of being we want our students to grow. We're all in this together and we have to work on this together. We're all a big team, so I don't think that many of us look at leaders as being the only person that we go to, the only person we look to for advice. I think we all look at each other and know that people are strong in certain areas.

Anderson elementary principal Doug recognized this practice as occurring in his school, in that no one needs to be advertised as a leader, but are known as those who have a particular strength and are willing to share with others.

> That's how we identify leaders here. The other ones are identified from a political standpoint such as "you know who would be good for that job is _____." One way I facilitate leadership is to suggest people in that way. I'll say "Why don't you ask _____ to do that because she's very good with that type of thing?" With their permission I'll always say "Can I have your permission to do this?" So they're not necessarily leaders, but are

people that are considered to be experts or willing to give assistance. So it's not an official label, but a collegial label which is just as powerful.

At the middle school level, principal Bruce cites how it is sometimes those individuals who prefer to stay in the background that have the most influence over their peers. There can exist an almost unspoken recognition of leadership that teachers value and prefer, helping initiatives to be effective with a formal production.

> I can tell you on my staff in this building who the leaders are and who aren't, and who if I have a problem or an issue or initiative who I need to quote "get their blessing" but who I need to run it by. I think it informally works with the teachers the same way. This is going to sound weird, but I look at it almost like the mafia. It's almost like silent. There's this one teacher who has a heck of a lot of pull in this building, but there's other people who are much more vocal. He's quiet, but I know that a lot of things other people are saying comes from him. He's an excellent teacher and does a lot of excellent things for the district; however, I wouldn't say he's on a lot of committees. So, it's an interesting thing, and I think he feels more comfortable that way. Not in the spotlight.

At Harbor Valley, principal Helen also notes that many teachers will shy away from having a formal title associated with them. As discussed previously, they may fear that having such an association with administration or being willing to step out too far will have a negative effect for them, but they still desire to better the educational practice in their schools.

> Those who actually are the teacher leaders, I don't say that word to them and they don't say those words to other people. Maybe it is kind of a barrier for them because I don't think any one of them wants to be seen by their peers as somebody the administration picked and we like them better than you kind of thing. So, I think that they don't present themselves as leaders. They just present themselves as, "Hey, I found something that works really well, you may want to look at it too.

Principal Laura believes that teachers are not motivated to become leaders due to receiving recognition on a formal level, but simply are motivated to do good things for kids.

> When teachers take on teacher leadership roles it's basically intrinsic and I think that their motivation is 'what can I do that's best for kids.' I think being given recognition – everyone likes recognition. I think that they want recognition within their immediate work environment. They appreciate recognition from those people in formal leadership roles like Superintendent, and directors, and principals. Do I think being told they have a title is it, then "No." I think they want to get involved because they feel they have something beneficial to say and they truly want to help kids.

Recognition of Individual Strengths

In the two districts studied, participants responded that teacher leaders are identified based largely on the recognition of the individual strengths that teachers possess. True to a distributed model, a system needs to recognize what individuals will be most appropriate to solve the problem at hand or lead in a particular situation. The strengths that an individual may possess may be beneficial in one situation, but not in others. Therefore, leadership may be a fluid practice, where some may step forward to lead at a given point in time, but step back when necessary to allow them to take charge. As Harbor Valley teacher Francis stated, a teacher leader has "to be willing to step down if there is somebody else who needs a chance to lead."

Harbor Valley teacher Donna also has experienced in her school how teachers are identified to lead in professional development activities based on how principals and teachers have observed their practice in the classroom, though not initially. When the district began in ELI, it was those who started in the

core team took the lead, but the process evolved as more teacher strengths were

realized through observation.

> How we started was, we had the ELI team and we started with that group. That we were going to be the leaders. Then, the first year we kind of led an in-service as the ELI team and that went really well. Then, we didn't want to be the only leaders, so as administrators saw as they were observing in classrooms and what we saw in classrooms, because I go into all the classrooms I can say "She's really good at this" or "This would be good if we're going to have people in-service on this, they can teach about this or that." We then wanted to spread it out to other people because everybody is an expert in something, so we want everybody to share their ideas.

Laura, principal at Harbor Valley, believes a large function of her principal

role is to recognize the individual strengths that teachers possess. Allowing those

teachers to take their strengths and share with other teachers can help the staff

to grow, improving the collective practice.

> I think the job of middle management, the job of principals is to understand what are these teachers really gifted at leading. Different teachers have different areas in which they can lead. I think that through the evolution of the role of leadership, teachers as leaders that's come about the last ten years in education, we understand that teachers have different gifts for leading and the obstacles are not recognizing those gifts and those talents, and where they lie. There's teachers here that are amazing when it comes to teaching technology and working with teachers, not only in our building but across the district. That in my mind is leadership. We have a second grade teacher who when we got our new Harcourt program, is really gifted in technology and spent the summer going through all of the technology supports for her grade level and emailed them out to all of the elementary teachers in the district. She's not on the ELI team, but she's certainly a leader when it comes to that sort of thing.

Adam, too, at the high school level at Anderson identifies recognizing the

leadership capabilities of his staff as a primary responsibility in his role as a

principal.

> Frequently I talk to my assistant principal about this. At night I'll go up and down the hallway and think about things that people are doing or things

that I haven't recognized, or maybe people that can be better served in a different place on a committee role in my mind just to make sure that we're maximizing our resources.

Characteristics of Teacher Leaders

Teacher and principals offered slightly different perspectives regarding the characteristics of a teacher leader and who is most likely to be identified as a teacher leader within their school setting. Much of the focus of teacher responses was on teacher willingness to collaborate with their peers and share with one another.

At Harbor Valley, elementary teacher Ellen finds that teacher leaders are "very open to people coming into our classroom, needing to be innovative,.., to be very approachable to other teachers." Their practice as it relates to ELI and teacher leadership is centered on the sharing of best practices. She relates that whether it is teachers or administrators who are seeking out the leaders, both are looking for individuals who possess these qualities.

Alice, as a teacher at Anderson, shares a similar perspective as she states that one needs to have "the willingness to share," and as a leader you need to be "able to put yourself out there and not be affected by other people's thoughts."

Part of being willing to share, and to work effectively with colleagues, is that teacher leaders also need to have a personality and perspective that allows them to interact appropriately with peers. When seeking out teachers to lead in a particular situation, Harbor Valley teacher Francis believes that when principal were looking for teachers to lead instructional initiatives, they weren't only looking

for those who were knowledgeable, but "they were also thinking about people who would be well-received by others."

Another major theme with regard to characteristics of teacher leaders, particularly described by participants from Anderson school district, was holding a perspective that looks just beyond the immediate situation but to the bigger vision of what needs to be accomplished. Teachers must be on-board with the vision and be willing to do what it takes to get the job done, as elementary principal Connie states.

> The huge thing is that they have to be someone who shares the vision. The other thing, for me, is they have to be realistic. They have to know what the brutal facts are and be able to say that's what they are. You know, we're not hiring another coach or another reading specialist, so instead of worrying about that saying how can we make what we have work. I'm big on those kinds of things; someone that can be a communicator and be positive. Some that is truly comfortable going back amongst their colleagues and sharing ideas. For me, if it's something where I am responsible for choosing or selecting then I'm looking for that type of person to fit that role.

Elementary teacher Barbara also talks about teacher leaders having that perspective, and how they are able to put the needs of the students above their own. Looking out for what will best improve instructional practice without altering for your own agenda and communicating the mission to peers is essential.

The secondary principals at Anderson turn the focus on teacher leaders being knowledgeable and passionate about their work. In particular, Bruce says, being "passionate about kids." In order to be a teacher leader one must be committed to student learning, as it is the core mission of an educational system. Passion must be combined with knowledge, as teachers respect those who do know what they are talking about and get results in the classroom setting. Adam,

at the high school, details the need for knowledge and passion, but also relates

to the earlier theme of being able to share those traits with colleagues in an

effective manner.

> They have to be passionate about their beliefs and realistic in how to get people to follow along. What I mean by that is I think teacher leaders have a pretty good understanding of the constituents of people. I think they are passionate about what they say, but they also understand they have to catch that captive audience and make sure that they're not doing something that is completely counter maybe to what other teachers believe.

Helen, principal in Harbor Valley, echoes the need to be knowledgeable,

but also includes the need for a teacher leader to be positive. While it is often a

common practice to bring in "nay-sayers" to be part of a committee in order to

bring alternate perspectives and win over those who may also take a negative

approach, in her experience the ELI-led initiatives in her district have been

successful due to targeting those individuals during the initial stages.

Also at Harbor Valley, principal Laura believes that teacher leaders are

seeking the opportunity to make a difference in their school or district, and those

are the individuals who are sought out to lead.

> The people that we've engaged in leadership, I think that is really what we're looking for. They want to make a difference, they want to be involved in decisions, and when their input is valued then I think that is the support that they need. The opportunities to impact other people, I think that is done in a lot of different ways.

Reflections of Superintendents

Upon completion of analysis of the interview responses obtained from the

teachers and principals who were willing to participate in this study, a brief

summary of the themes presented in the responses was composed for each of

the two school districts studied. The themes were organized according to the four

sub-questions used to guide the study, referring to the roles, supports, obstacles, and identification associated with teacher leadership.

The summary of responses was shared with the superintendent of each of the respective school districts participating in the study. Each superintendent was presented with the summary for their review, and an interview was scheduled with each of them to discuss their thoughts and reflections on how teacher leadership is perceived and valued by the teachers and principals in their district, and how those perceptions may align with their own.

When discussing with the superintendent from Anderson school district, she was pleased to learn of the similar responses of the teachers and principals in all of the categories, and how the two groups seem to balance each other. Specifically, she noted how teachers observe that administrators seek out teachers to take on leadership roles, and how principals state they look for "high flyers" to take on leadership activities. The summary matched how she believed teacher leadership is occurring within her district, noting that while there is a culture supportive of a distributed approach to leadership, there is still work to be done.

The Anderson superintendent acknowledges that since becoming involved with ELI, teachers have been more willing to initiate leadership opportunities on their own. While the teachers at the secondary level had typically been more willing to step forward, recent years have seen teachers at the elementary level emerging at a higher level. Some of the emergence has been due to changing conditions, where the elementary schools have undergone a re-structuring

process. During the process, teacher leaders were identified by administrators and the teacher ranks to serve on a committee to facilitate the re-structuring, allowing the teachers to be empowered and have a voice in how the new format would unfold.

One of the leadership activities cited as being very valued in the Anderson school district by the superintendent was teacher involvement in the annual leadership retreat. The retreat would occur off-campus, after the school year had ended for the purpose of identifying the goals and focus for the upcoming year. She described how over the past few years, the goals have transitioned from being administratively initiated to more teacher-developed:

> Two years ago at our administrative retreat, where we take our admin team and we take about 24 teacher leaders with and go and stay overnight somewhere, we go and work through what's going on in the district. We actually had teachers back here on the last day of school answer three or four questions around what they were doing in their classroom, around teacher leadership and where they thought we also needed to go as a district. We took that and shook it down, and we ended up with four areas of focus. Student growth is our goal, but then we had student success, technology, the re-structuring, and curriculum mapping and assessment portfolios are what came out of that. This was the first time that we were really… I always knew the superintendent went to the retreat with their manipulated plan ready to go. Not that we manipulate, but we do know what we really want to be the goal out of it. I knew I wanted some committee ideas or team ideas, but had no idea where it was going to go. That's what happened, and when we got there it was all teacher-driven. So we are now in our third year, and we went to the retreat and those are the ideas that came out, and we still haven't changed anything, but taken those four committees and moved forward, and they are very teacher-driven.

ELI and the Colleague-in-Residence relationship provided through the initiative are credited with helping Anderson reach that deeper level of distributed practice:

I think in taking our leadership deeper, taking away a layer, I think ELI did that. I think that having the Colleague-in-Residence is key to what we are as ELI. _____ is our CIR and she works mainly with our principals, but it's a result of what she does that then grows out in the building. That has changed, that CIR relationship because we started out with the CIR helping the whole district with instructional practices and that wasn't as effective as getting to the heart of teacher leadership or getting to the heart of how we do things. She's the one who's helped us with the school governance model that we're trying to roll out now. She's helped my principals with assessment portfolios, and met with small groups of teachers on assessment, and then the high school with their assessment portfolio reviews so that they could get deeper with each other. I value our partnership with Pitt and ELI, and would hate to see it go away.

The Anderson superintendent additionally focused her reflections on how over the district's time working with ELI, the way teacher leader leadership has been valued has moved beyond more of a "surface level" approach and into deeper levels of collaboration:

I think we were very surface-oriented for a long time, but we've peeled away some of the onion to get to a deeper teacher leadership model. The other thing that I see when our high school people, who are a little farther along in their assessment portfolios and they have collaborative groups, it was very much "great job", accolade type of stuff. Now they have conversations where they say "why are you doing it this way" or "have you thought about doing it this way", "what do you think about this?" So it's become a collegial atmosphere where they're growing each other, and I see that as teacher leadership too. Even if it's small group, it still teacher leadership.

The distributed approach that has evolved is valued by the superintendent as she believes it matches her leadership style and has helped the district move forward in meeting its goals:

I think that for me, my leadership style is more of shared responsibility. I know the buck stops here, but I want to hear what you think about it and why you think we should go one way or another. I think teachers like that, and it's why we had an early bird for our contract. It's why when we say we want to do this, we have people say, "yeah, I'll do that" much easier than we would if we still had that more surface type teacher leadership

where people were coming to be leaders, but they really weren't into it as deep as they could be.

At Harbor Valley School District, the superintendent also shared that she believed the perceptions of teacher leadership shared by the teachers and principals in her school district were in line with how she perceives it exists as well. She stated that she believed the themes discovered in the data collection match those conversations she has had with teachers and principals in her district.

Opposite from Anderson School District, the superintendent at Harbor Valley perceives that teacher leadership has evolved to a greater extent at the elementary level than the secondary:

> I think that there is a little bit of a difference between what teacher leadership looks like in the elementary and what teacher leadership looks like in the secondary. I think there is a little bit of a difference there. I think it's just because of the nature of the elementary teachers and their structures. They have common planning time with people at their own grade level, so they have a lot of opportunity with their principal to sit and share, and that kind of thing. Even in my interview that I had for my superintendent position, the president of the teacher association here was in the final interview, and his question to me was that people in the secondary feel that people in the elementary really collaborate and there is a lot more leadership in the elementary. He was wondering how I saw that moving forward if I would get the role. So, I think there is a little bit of a difference between elementary and secondary.

The Harbor Valley superintendent reflected upon how she values the teacher leadership as it takes place within her district, and how the Harbor Valley district has focused on developing teacher leadership at multiple levels in order for the entire system to be successful:

> I think that teacher leadership is critical if you're going to have a successful school district. Really, teachers are the experts, they have a lot of expertise. It's up to administrators to coordinate and channel that

expertise. We have to see the big picture. I think that the more that you showcase the good things that are going on in the district and make people aware of them. We've always done that model of leadership that's like three levels. The first level of leadership is being an expert in your classroom, then being an expert in your building, then at the top is being an expert in the district, sharing from other districts, and learning from other districts. If everybody could get that base level of leadership, being a leader in their own classroom, seeking out what's best practice and learning from other people to bring it back to their classroom, I think that's when districts are successful.

Though teacher leadership had existed before the district had initiated a relationship with ELI, she credits ELI with incorporating leadership into everyday conversation and help teachers understand their leadership actions:

The one thing that ELI did that I've seen since I've been here is the language of leadership, providing a common language for everybody. People didn't use the words teacher leaders. They were there but they didn't call them teacher leaders necessarily. Now, we're kind of backing away from that a little bit because we've kind of broadened who are the teacher leaders. But, we still use the words leadership and teachers being leaders. I think before ELI that language wasn't really used across the board.

Similar to the teachers and principals at Harbor Valley, the superintendent described how teachers have played a large role in leading professional development activities within their schools. She shared that on their most recent in-service day, the elementary agenda was entirely teacher-led. While originally those presenting or planning may have been part of the ELI core team, it has now evolved so that most of the people who presented on the most recent date were not ELI team members.

Reflections of Teacher Association Leadership

The summary of themes identified in the data collection process with principals and teachers participating in the study were shared with the teacher

association president at Anderson school district, who volunteered to participate in the study. Similar to the superintendents, the association president was asked to review the summary of response and then participate in a brief interview to discuss their reflections.

The association president from Anderson School District was impressed with how similar the response themes were between the teachers and principals. He was not surprised by the fact, as he believed that teachers had been involved in many leadership capacities within the district for some time. ELI, as he cited, has helped to provide a greater degree of structure and validity to the leadership efforts of faculty.

The responses were in line with the Anderson association president's own views on how teacher leadership is taking place within the district. The culture supports a collaborative approach to leadership, and is student-centered in nature:

> Teacher leadership has become pretty much engrained as part of our culture in the district, and it's really become a true – and again, ELI has played an important part in that – but also through a mutual understanding that when we look at what we do and the issues that we face, we look at it from the perspective of what's best for kids. That has become the over-riding theme of everything that we do. Even in contract negotiations it has become "what's best for the kids." If there is rationale in the logic behind it, then we're behind it as well. I think that has played a very important part in terms of how people have really taken on these roles as teacher leaders, and how they have been supported by administrators in these roles as well.

Similar to a response by some of the elementary teachers who responded, the association president at Anderson, who teaches at the high school, shared how ELI has helped teachers to value leadership in that there is no rank or hierarchy associated with it:

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One thing that I think has been very critical to our success here has been the understanding that leadership is not a position. It's a role, and you don't have to have a title. You simply have to have something to offer. People value what others have to offer, and that's just become part of our culture.

He had been involved with ELI since its inception, and values the atmosphere that it promotes where teachers can converse with administrators to share ideas without intimidation:

If somebody thinks that they've done something that is valuable and should be shared with others, you see very little reluctance on the part of people to step forward and say they'd be willing to present at an in-service or talk with a cohort during a morning meeting. It's part of the culture and people feel comfortable doing it.

It is believed that this atmosphere exists at Anderson, without the adversarial relationships that will often exist in other districts. In his view, ELI has helped promote the culture where teachers are comfortable in initiating leadership opportunities and are recognized as contributors to the schools practice.

At Anderson, the association president also values the collaboration between the association and administration to provide a morning time in each school day where teachers can collaborate and share ideas with one another:

By joint initiative from both sides, we negotiated in morning time, where we have a half an hour every morning for collaboration and discussion. I think that in and of itself has really lent to the process because time is always one of those big factors. By having this it has allowed people to emerge who can now step in where they feel comfortable and where they have a strength. Maybe it's in analyzing data or student scores. Maybe it's in presenting a best practice from their classroom, or whatever the case may be. Now that we have this time we can accomplish those kinds of things. I think it's really played a significant role in helping to validate the importance of the process.

Summary

This chapter provided an analysis of the data collected throughout this study, emphasizing the responses provided in a personal interview setting with those individuals who have experienced teacher leadership practice within the school districts studied. The teachers who participated have experienced the phenomenon of teacher leadership, stepping forward to assume leadership roles within their district. The principals who participated in the study have witnessed teacher leadership taking place within their schools, and have worked to support it through various means. The two school districts sampled to participate in this comparative case study each take part in ELI, an initiative through the University of Pittsburgh that helps facilitate teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice as part of the culture within its member schools.

In chapter five, the data analysis provided in this chapter will be used to provide conclusions that will answer the research questions used to guide this study. Additionally, implications for professional practice as well as recommendations for future study will be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was designed to examine the perceptions of teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice as they exist through the eyes of both teachers and building principals. The teachers and principals who participated in this study have been involved with the ELI initiative within their school district, placing an emphasis on developing such leadership practice in their schools. In chapter four of this study, the perceptions of the participants were analyzed initially to determine the Stage (or Stages) of Concern, as defined by the work of Hall and Hord (1987), in which the teachers' initial thoughts may be categorized. Additional follow-up questions were used to provide greater depth to responses, and seek perceptions with regard to specific aspects of the roles, supports, obstacles, and identification practices that are associated with teacher leadership. Those results compiled in the previous chapter will be used to detail the findings of this study, as well as shape the conclusions and recommendations provided in this chapter for the purpose of helping school districts identify those elements that may better facilitate teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice within their schools.

Summary of the Study

A comparative case study approach was utilized to answer the over-arching research question used to drive this study, how do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions of teacher leadership and distributed leadership practice as it exists in their schools? The perceptions of teacher and building principals were obtained through the use of personal interviews, with

observation and review of documents such as meeting or professional development agendas, curricular portfolios, and student assessment documents developed by teachers used to verify the results of teacher leadership practice and collaboration within the two school districts studied. During the personal interviews, each participant was asked to respond to the same four open-ended questions, each seeking to address the following four research sub-questions. The findings associated with each of the research questions are addressed individually.

1) How do teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the types of leadership roles that teachers should fill within their setting?

2) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of how teacher leadership is supported?

3) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perception of the obstacles that exist to teacher leadership?

4) How do teachers and building administrators differ in their perceptions regarding the identification of teacher leaders?

Findings

Sub-Question Number 1

The first question was designed to determine how teachers and building administrators differ in their perceptions of the roles that teacher leaders should fill. In coding the initial responses of the teachers, each of the participants had at least a significant portion of their responses being categorized in Stage 5 –

Collaboration, as compared to each of the principals being categorized at least in part within Stage 4 – Consequence.   While both groups had a similar focus on teachers filling roles that will yield positive results for students, the variance in level of concern is a telling result.

The principals had a clear focus on teachers leading initiatives that would increase student achievement. This could be accomplished through either formal or informal roles. At Anderson, teachers held positions on curriculum committees, as department chairs, or grade level leaders. Harbor Valley cited leadership on grade level teams and on initiatives for assessment and creating the mission of the school. Administrators from both districts valued the roles teachers play in providing professional development for peers, emphasizing how teachers can act as liaisons between the administration and the staff to impact change within the schools. Though similar to roles detailed by teachers, the emphasis was placed mainly on achieving results and improving performance.

Teacher participants certainly were concerned with student performance, however the emphasis in their responses centered around improving that performance through collaboration and interaction with their peers. A high priority is placed on sharing best practices with colleagues, mentoring new or less experienced teachers, and developing committees that will allow team interaction to achieve goals.

For each group, participants did reveal that giving a teacher a formal title was not important with regard to getting the job done. However, while responses were open-ended and the definition of teacher leader was provided to each

participant at the beginning of each interview session, many teacher responses still focused on formal roles while describing teacher leadership practice. It was not until more specific follow-up questions were asked that respondents began to focus on the more informal contributions of teacher leaders, indicating that a mind-set does still exist to some extent that teachers do not immediately view leadership outside of formal positions.

Teacher expertise is recognized by both teachers and principals as being critical to shaping the culture and practice of their school. By sharing strengths with peers, the school can collectively achieve its academic goals, and teachers feel empowered to have direct input in the initiatives that are driving their classroom success. Roles should be based on this regard, and in each district the participants perceive that more opportunities have been available since beginning their participation in the ELI initiative.

Multiple principals did report, however, that while ELI has helped the culture achieve its current status that promotes teachers stepping up to share ideas and lead initiatives, they are uncertain as whether direct credit should be given for the distributed leadership atmosphere that exists. They believe that through the collection of having the right individuals on board, both as administrators and teachers, the willingness to work as a team and engage in collaborative discussion to determine school vision has enabled them to progress. It becomes a type of "chicken or the egg" question, but they are not concerned with the answer – they just wish it to continue.

Sub-Question Number 2

The provision of supports for teacher leaders is critical if a district wants to develop a true distributed practice, rather than only have teacher leadership occur as specific events, as Spillane (2006) believes is the very core of distributed leadership. The second line of questioning within the study asked participants to discuss how support may be given to promote teacher leadership within their schools, allowing it to effectively occur.

Converse to the response of the principals for the first sub-question, in regard to the supports necessary for teacher leadership the initial responses of principals focused on the Stage 5 – Collaboration level of concern. Their primary concern was based on their ability to value the input and ideas of their teaching staff. The belief exists that if teacher leaders feel as if their voice is not heard, or the staff at large never is able to be represented in the decisions that directly affect them and their professional practice, then the system will not be able to achieve its goals. Many principals view it as their job to recognize the individual strengths of their staff members, and communicate with them to involve them in leadership practice when it will benefit the organization is paramount.

The principals also believe that while the recognition that they provide teachers for their contributions and successes will pay dividends in encouraging future teacher involvement, it is minimized in comparison with the effects of recognition received from teacher's peers. Teacher leadership can be supported through how teachers respect and encourage one another, and principals may help provide the forum to be able to do so. When teachers are given the

spotlight, and the opportunity to lead, their efforts can set an example for their colleagues, and encourage them to be willing to step forward as well.

When possible, principals view their role in support as creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Whether providing the framework and flexibility for in-service agendas or other professional development opportunities, or providing common planning or professional learning community time, the forum for teachers to share best practices on a regular basis promotes a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making.

The teacher respondents also value the time to collaborate, interacting with both their colleagues and principals on a regular basis. Overall, teacher responses on the topic of support were coded primarily in the Management, or Stage 3, level of concern. This level emphasizes putting the structures in place to allow the initiative to occur, and a heavy focus was placed on being provided time and resources.

Not only did concerns lie on how teachers could have time to interact during the regular school day, but also when asked to present for an in-service day or to a group of teachers. There is time that is needed to prepare for such an endeavor, and that time is often difficult to come by. Additionally, teachers depend on having the appropriate resources available to them in order to present. Having working technology and the supplies necessary to share their craft with their peers encourages teachers to want to serve as presenters again in the future, or encourage others to want to serve as a presenter when given the opportunity.

Teachers do value being recognized by both their principals and their peers. While feeling slightly forced into leadership at first in some cases, the ELI initiative is viewed as helping to make teachers more comfortable in assuming leadership roles or leading professional development. More specifically, once it was recognized what ELI was truly about through communication, teachers felt more comfortable in initiating their ideas, recognizing that ELI was not as much a "thing" as a concept or a philosophy, fitting within Spillane's (2006) model for distributed practice.

Both teachers and principals report that compensation is not typically available, at least in a monetary fashion, to reward teachers for their leadership efforts. However, it was not found to inhibit teachers from being willing to serve on committees, lead professional development, or any of the other more formal roles identified in the study. Teachers are appreciative of the recognition from their peers or supervisors, and take pleasure from helping promote positive professional practice in their school. They are quick to point out that the time they are given to prepare, the ability to attend workshops or trainings, and the provision of resources to accomplish tasks or initiatives are a form of compensation, and one that is appreciated.

Sub-Question Number 3

In many interviews, participants referenced the obstacles to teacher leadership before the specific question could be asked. As was referenced in the discussion of supports of teacher leadership, teachers value the support and recognition of their peers. Principals believe that teachers supporting one another and buying into the leadership roles of teachers is critical to the ultimate success

of the school organization. Therefore, when teachers are critical of one another, or have negative reactions to teacher leadership efforts, such actions can be toxic to creating a culture of collaboration and distributed leadership.

Teachers and principals alike had the bulk of their responses categorized in Stage 2 of the Concerns framework, dealing with the personal nature of concern in an initiative and how its implications will affect interactions of the dynamics of the school structure. There often exists a small percentage of teachers within a school district or school building who are quick to challenge the motive of those who take on additional duties or make an effort to share their practice with others. Accusations of trying to obtain the favor of the administration or thinking that one's ability is superior to others can be very damaging to the teacher who is willing to put themselves on the line. What was described as the "tall poppy syndrome" by Danielson (2007) takes effect, where once the teacher leader feels the pressure from their colleagues, they shy away from taking part in future leadership opportunities.

Specific stories shared by interview participants indicated just how extreme the criticism of teacher peers can be, describing professional development sessions where teachers who facilitated the session are verbally challenged by the colleagues in the audience, sometimes quite intensely. Others have experienced more subtle criticism, but enough that over time it can wear them down, making them question whether their efforts are worth continuing.

Principals recognize this challenge, and note this as a concern most commonly with younger teachers. As noted by Johnson and Donaldson (2007),

the more veteran colleagues of less experienced teachers may discourage them from taking on leadership roles, believing they are "too young or inexperienced." The principals view it as part of their role to help teachers recognize their capabilities, particularly those who may have a fresh perspective or attitude, and when other staff members try to work to the contrary it can be a great hindrance to getting an initiative off the ground.

Both teachers and principals also recognize the obstacle associated with continually asking the same teachers to be part of committees, present at in-service workshops, or attend events as a representative of the school. Teachers often feel obligated to continue their leadership efforts, but also are fearful of spending too much time outside of the classroom and losing time with students. Also, the time needed to invest outside of school to prepare for extra duties can become exhausting and interfere with personal commitments and family duties.

While principals can admit to being guilty of overburdening the same individuals at times, they often feel "stuck", as other teachers simply are unwilling to be part of the distributed practice. Their unwillingness to "take their turn" serving on a committee, or share their talents when asked to collaborate with peers or present on an in-service day, is an obstacle in itself. If true distributed practice counts on those with the greatest strength or ability to take a lead in an initiative when the circumstances call for it, those individuals need to be willing to do their part.

Another obstacle identified by both principals and teachers is the demoralization teachers may feel if an initiative that teachers have invested a

great deal of time in falls by the way side after a year or two simply to move on to another similar initiative. Teachers begin to perceive initiatives as a passing fad, and are less likely to be willing to volunteer for the next charge or work with as much fidelity if they believe their efforts are in vain and will only be temporary in nature. As is often the trend in public education, funding may disappear, administrative turnover brings new concepts, or state regulations force a new direction with regard to curricular or assessment requirements. Whatever the case, when initiatives are perceived to be doomed as short-lived, obtaining teacher buy-in and those teachers willing to lead the charge for their peers is more difficult to come by.

Sub-Question Number 4

The perceptions of how teacher leaders are identified within their schools focused mainly on the criteria for those filling formal leadership roles such as grade level leader, department head, or committee member. How individuals have been selected to become members of the ELI core team in their districts were also discussed. When prompted further through follow-up questioning, principals and teachers described what characteristics they believe a teacher leader should possess, as well as who teachers are most likely to view as a teacher leader.

Teacher responses, similar to how they viewed the roles that teachers should fill, based much of their responses on how teachers are able to interact with their colleagues as a primary criterion for teacher leadership. They believe that those who are able to share their strategies and best practices in a way that their colleagues are willing to receive in a positive way is a critical attribute, as

much of the leadership roles in their school are built on professional development and collaboration. These individuals are able to see the big picture with regard to district goals, and are viewed to be willing to represent the teaching staff without being affected by the contrarians or nay-sayers who are negative in nature.

In many cases, teachers believe that leaders naturally emerge within the system, and their strengths are recognized by teachers and principals alike. With the emergence of ELI within their districts, and the ability to observe one another's practice more frequently through learning walks or walkthrough observations, teachers recognize the abilities of their colleagues, and have created a culture where they are more willing to ask one another to share their best practices.

Principals tended to also be coded the same as they were when discussing the roles of teachers, ranging in the Stage 4 – Consequence level. While there was a focus on the teacher leaders ability to interact successfully with their colleagues, as well as the administration, the primary focus of their responses were centered on the teacher's passion for working with students, enjoying their profession, and being committed to student achievement. Initial responses focused on being able to get the job done in the classroom, and being knowledgeable in their field in order to be qualified to share their expertise with their peers.

Both teachers and principals agreed that having a formal title was not typically a motivation for teachers to seek or accept leadership roles within their district. Those who are identified as leaders have been because of their

willingness to extend their professional practice, and their desire to help their colleagues grow and improve the educational efforts of their school. In both districts studied, and in the case of both teachers and principals, the belief was held that their schools promote a culture that is supportive of teacher leadership, will allow teachers to be recognized for their efforts and feel comfortable in exerting themselves as leaders.

Implications for Professional Practice

The findings of this study indicated that a great deal of the success of teacher leadership efforts and teacher leadership practice is based on the ability to collaborate with others and remaining focused on the ultimate goal of student achievement. Collaboration occurs on several levels, both between teachers and principals and, perhaps more importantly based on the perceptions given by the participants, between teachers and their colleagues.

On a large scale, teachers stated that they believe their success as teacher leaders is based on having the supports in place to allow them to have time to interact with their colleagues, to observe their best practices or share their ideas with others. Teacher-led professional development is viewed as extremely beneficial, and that requires being able to identify the relative strengths of the members of their team. Professional development was not limited to formal in-service day agendas, but also took place during common planning time, professional learning community time, or was even organized informally by teacher groups who met outside of school to discuss professional reading. When

provided the forum, teachers who are willing to share will often do so eagerly, but they recognize the commitment of time is a challenge.

In addition to the challenge of producing time in an already busy instructional day, teacher respect for one another was cited as producing perhaps the largest obstacle to teacher leadership. Several teachers reported being challenged or faced with criticism by their peers for taking on leadership roles, and some admitted to considering not continuing with their practice due to the actions of colleagues. Both teachers and principals recognized that teachers can be their own worst enemy when supporting teacher leadership efforts. By communicating the intent of an initiative, how teacher leaders are selected, and by incorporating as many individuals in the process as possible, negative feelings toward those who are presenting or engaging in leadership practice have been lessened.

Much of teacher leadership success has do with, as Collins (2001) described, getting the "right people on the bus" and most importantly getting those individuals "in the right seats." Principals have attributed the success of each of their districts in promoting teacher leadership not only to their relationship with ELI, but also the fact that they have a number of individuals on their staff that share the philosophy of a team approach, and are willing to collaborate in order to benefit the school mission. Principals value the input and expertise of their staff, and most of the teachers desire to work interactively with their peers rather than in isolation. Both groups, in both of the districts studied, believed they had an obligation to recognize the strengths of the teaching staff, and place

individuals in positions where they can share those strengths with others in a manner that they complement each other and help one another to grow.

As teachers became more comfortable recognizing themselves as leaders, and how their actions impact the ultimate success of their students and schools, they were able to expand their practice on a more regular basis. While teachers mainly identified leaders associated with formal titles or roles on committees, they came to understand that most teachers have the ability or capability to serve as a leader in some regard in an informal manner. Promotion and recognition of informal leadership was seen to enhance the culture of the school, leading to the distributed practice that Spillane (2006) described.

It is important to note how the concept of ELI works in coordination with the philosophy of Spillane with regard to distributed leadership as a practice within schools rather than an event. Both principals and teachers acknowledged that an obstacle to promoting teacher leadership in the past has been the tendency of schools to buy into a particular program or initiative, investing time and resources, only to see it replaced by another a year or two down the road. At first glance, teachers viewed the ELI as "another program," but over time recognized that it was simply a forum to support teachers becoming involved in the decision-making process and accentuate the positive work they are doing with others through collaboration. The districts determine their own goals, with teachers at the center of identifying the strengths and areas of need within their school. As they recognized that they themselves were creating the goals and initiatives, and the culture of the school was shaped in such a way to involve

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teachers in this regard, leadership opportunities expanded and teacher collaboration evolved in a positive, productive manner.

The reflections of the superintendents and the union association president provided additional insight to the culture and true practice of distributed leadership as it occurs in the two districts studied. These individuals unanimously believed that the perceptions reported by both the teacher and principal groups were valid not only by their own observations, but because they interact regularly with the individuals in their building. As the superintendent from Harbor Valley noted, she was glad to see the perceptions reported in the study matched those she had gleaned through her own conversations and interactions with members of the faculty.

The superintendents of each of the two school districts studied display the philosophy that while they must ultimately take responsibility and provide the final authorization on events in their districts, they respect and value the input of their faculty, and make teacher leadership part of their school practice. The collective and individual strengths of teachers within each of their districts have been harvested in many ways to shape the goals, philosophy, and successes of their schools. ELI has been valued in that is has provided a more structured approach to providing leadership opportunities, and though teacher leaders had existed previous to membership in the initiative, it has opened the doors on a broader scale to all staff and helped them to recognize the leadership potential in what they do.

The teacher association president from Anderson who participated in the study provided his endorsement of teacher leadership and district involvement in ELI. While he helped Anderson work with ELI since its beginning stages, he too has recognized how it did not create a culture of distributed practice, but rather helped it to flourish. The culture of mutual respect and willingness to learn from one another as he believes it to exist within his district has helped them to achieve many successes as well as minimize conflict between the faculty and administration.

Recommendations for Future Study

The focus of this study and the sample selected to collect data centered around two main criteria. The school districts that were examined as case studies had to have been part of ELI for a minimum of two years, and the teachers who participated in the interview process needed to have been involved with ELI in their district as part of their core team. Therefore, the perceptions and perspectives presented within this study are based on individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of teacher leadership or have been involved with its facilitation.

As a supplement to the methodology of this study, one may also choose to interview teachers who have not been involved as a member of the ELI core team, or hold any formal leadership roles. A comparison between the responses of these individuals and those selected because they are viewed as teacher leaders would provide insight to how those groups perceive the topics of the sub-research questions regarding the roles, supports, obstacles, and identification processes associated with teacher leadership. Just as this study identifies the

gaps and commonalities between teachers and building administrators in order to help better facilitate teacher leadership and distributed practice, such an extension of the study would look at gaps and comparisons between teachers who do and do not participate in leadership activities for the same purpose.

It also must be recognized that this study is limited to two school districts out of as many as 18 that may have been selected to participate in this study. Certainly each district has its own unique characteristics, demographics, initiatives, and challenges. While the results between the two districts sampled for this study were similar in many ways, each still had their unique experiences and perceptions that set them apart and contributed to the body of research compiled within this dissertation. The differing perceptions that could be added from any of the other ELI districts would add a greater depth and insight toward addressing the research questions.

In addition to the examination of other school districts in ELI as a recommendation for future study, districts that are not part of a formal leadership initiative associated with a university or outside organization should be considered. The districts studied in this project had shown a commitment to promoting teacher leadership and establishing a culture of distributed leadership practice by working in cooperation with ELI, and thus had a willingness and desire to achieve the goals associated. An interesting perspective would include the roles, supports, obstacles, and identification of teacher leadership in school districts where such a relationship had not been established, and the district was working independently or without the conscious intent of establishing teacher

leadership practice. A comparison on ELI and non-ELI schools could be conducted to determine the influence that collaborating with an outside organization may have on the perceptions of teachers and principals toward teacher leadership.

Finally, within the analysis of results a distinction was not made between responses participants of differing demographic groups. Comparisons in future study may be made between the perceptions of individuals based on gender, age, years of experience, grade level or subject area taught, and so on.

Conclusion

The desired benefit of this study was to provide insight as to how teacher leadership may effectively take place in school districts, based on the perceptions of the teachers and building administrators who have been involved in its practice. Upon analysis of the data obtained in this study, it was found that many of the perceptions provided by the participants align with the existing research on the practice of teacher leadership. However, the unique demographics, staff characteristics, and involvement with ELI of the school districts sampled provide additional aspects that should be considered in order to best facilitate distributed practice.

The over-arching research question that guided this study was to determine if teachers and building administrators differ in their perceptions of teacher leadership and distributed practice as it exists in their schools. While most responses of teachers and principals focused on the same topics with regard to roles, supports, obstacles, and identification of teacher leaders, the

reportable difference was in the approach and perspective of the two groups as they related to each category.

Overall, principal perceptions of teacher leadership tended to focus on the ultimate outcome of student achievement. Principals recognize the importance of interactions between colleagues and the staff at large, but initial thoughts are first driven toward meeting the goals of student proficiency. The roles that teachers assume are geared toward increasing student achievement, and the teachers that principals seek to lead initiatives are those who are knowledgeable in their area of expertise and are effective as educators.

Teacher responses, while obviously connected to student achievement, were quicker to recognize the necessity for collaboration and impact of interpersonal relations. Roles were based around sharing practices with their colleagues, and the ability to present in an amicable manner. Leadership actions centered on helping to educate one another with regard to instruction and curriculum, and those selected or identified to fill such roles must possess the personality to engage their peers, as well as be able to deflect the negative criticism they may incur for their actions.

Both groups that participated in the process had an overall perspective that teacher leadership actions are meant to benefit not only a few individuals, but also enhance the ability and progress of the entire school or district. While perspectives slightly differed in their initial phrasing, the agreement on the core outcome is the same. One may conclude, then, that in order to best facilitate teacher leadership practice the two perspectives must be recognized and

communicated with one another. Principals may share the end goal that they wish to realize by the actions of the group, and teachers may report the dynamic of the personalities of the school staff, and what the approach may be in order to obtain "buy-in" and the collective effort of the staff.

It must be stressed once again that principals and teachers in both districts have recognized that time is necessary to establish a truly distributed leadership practice in their schools, and that an element of trust exists in order to make that possible. Principals must provide support to their staff by valuing their input and being willing to listen to the ideas their staff is initiating, as both they and teachers stated. Putting the structures in place with regard to time and resources will encourage teachers to continue in their efforts. Likewise, teachers must be willing to share with one another, working collaboratively and placing their egos aside in order to be open to the practices that have produced results for students and meet the vision of the school or district. Communication of goals and decisions, as well as expectations for teacher leaders and their roles, lies at the crux of establishing a culture conducive to teacher leadership, and must be conducted on a continual basis in order to become engrained in the philosophy of the school.

In the spirit of Danielson (2007), principals cannot do it alone. In fact, no one individual can accomplish the goals of their district or meet the needs of students at an appropriate level. The pressures of public education and the moral obligations of being an educator commit all those who serve in that arena to be able to recognize the strengths of individuals and incorporate the leadership

practice of the whole staff in order to obtain optimal results. When principals and

teachers can draw from the strengths of one another, and those best qualified to

lead are given the platform to do so, the leadership capacity of the organization

will increase. By drawing on the strengths of the teaching staff, and collaborating

with an emphasis on best practices, districts may successfully meet the

challenges of the current educational era and beyond.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study:

An Examination of Teacher Leadership Perception of Teachers and Building Administrators
Using a Comparative Case Study Approach

Researcher:

Matthew Curci
816 Barclay Road
Indiana, PA 15701
curcim@apolloridge.com
724-840-4211 (cell)
724-478-6033 (office)

Advisor:

Dr. Cathy Kaufman
Professor Professional Studies in Education
126 Davis Hall
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, PA 15705
Phone: (724) 357-3928

1. **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to determine how teachers differ from building administrators in their
perceptions of teacher leadership. For the purpose of this study, teacher leaders are defined as
teachers who "lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community
of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice."
(Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001, p.5) Comparisons will be made between teacher and building
administrator perceptions in regards to the characteristics of teacher leaders, roles that teacher
leaders may fill, and obstacles that exist to the utilization of teachers as leaders.

2. **Procedures to be Followed:**

After your acceptance of participation in the study, I will arrange a meeting with you at a time
and location of your convenience. At this meeting you will participate in an interview focusing on
your perception of teacher leadership lasting approximately 25 minutes to 40 minutes in length.
An audio recording instrument will be used to transcribe the interview after its completion. You
will receive a copy of the transcript and be asked to review the transcript to ensure accuracy and
help to clear up any miscommunication. A second face-to-face meeting may be arranged if
necessary to discuss any issues with the transcript, as well to ask you follow up questions
regarding the interview.

3. **Risks and Benefits:**

There are no risks to participate in the study.
The importance of this study lies in identifying potential disconnect between the perceptions of teacher leadership, including how the concept applies to public schools, as held by teachers and building administrators. While the need for a distributed approach to leadership has been promoted on a national scale, and both teachers and building administrators may see the benefits of such a model, the concept fails to take hold or succumbs to the prevailing obstacles in its path. The results of this study will be beneficial to both teachers and administrators in creating an understanding of both groups' perceptions, and identifying a common ground to help teacher leadership initiatives take root.

4. **Compensation:**

There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

5. **Duration/Time:**

The face-to face interview should take approximately 25 to 40 minutes of your time. Shortly after the interview, I will transcribe the interview using a recording device and it will be sent to you for your review. Upon review of the transcript, a second meeting may be arranged should there be a need for additional clarification or communication. This meeting may take place by phone or in-person.

6. **Confidentiality:**

The only persons who will have access to my study will be me, my advisor, and my dissertation committee. All materials pertaining to the study will be locked in a cabinet in my home office. Upon compilation of the study or any reports pertaining to the study, pseudonyms will be used for all school districts or individuals participating in the study such as Teacher A, District B, etc. You will be able to review all transcripts prior to the printing of any of your information.
Additional communication, such as phone or email, will be treated in the same manner with regard to confidentiality. In compliance with federal regulations, your informed consent document and all research data will be retained for a minimum of three years. All such materials will be locked in a cabinet in my home office.

7. **To Find Out More Information About the Project:**

Please contact either me (curcim@apolloridge.com or (724) 840-4211) or Dr. Cathy Kaufman (ckaufman@iup.edu or (724) 357-3928) for additional details pertaining to this study.

8. **Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time by notifying me at the provided contact information. You may refuse to answer any interview questions or choose not to share artifacts or documents for the purpose of the study.

If you are in agreement with the terms stated above and willing to participate in the study, please sign the consent form enclosed and either mail it to me or give it to me at the first interview. A second copy is provided that you may keep for your records.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time through personal conversation, written communication, phone call, or email. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached _____

Best days and times to reach you _____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raise, and have witnessed the above signature.

_____   _____
Date   Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX B

List of Interview Questions for Teachers/Principals

Definition of a teacher leader – those who "lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice" (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p.5)

1. What types of leadership roles should teachers fill within their school or district?

   - Are teachers currently filling these roles within your school or district?
   - Since your involvement in ELI, have you seen more opportunities for teachers to serve as leaders? How so?
   - Since your involvement in ELI, how have teachers created or initiated more of their own opportunities to take on leadership roles?

2. How can teachers be supported to effectively serve as leaders?

   - How may administrators support teacher leadership?
   - How may teachers support teacher leadership?
   - What could help make you feel more supported as a teacher leader?
   - Is there a culture that supports teacher leadership within your school?

3. What obstacles exist to teacher leadership?

   - Since your involvement in ELI, how has compensation for involvement in teacher leadership practices changed?
   - How do teachers perceive the teacher leadership practices of their colleagues?

4. How are teacher leaders selected within your school?

   - Who is most likely to be selected as a teacher leader within your school?
   - What are characteristics that a teacher leader should possess?

APPENDIX C

List of Interview Questions for Superintendents and Teacher Association Presidents

1) What were your first impressions of the summary of responses provided to you?

2) How did the responses indicated to you in the summary match your perceptions of how teacher leadership is taking place within your district?

3) How do you value teacher leadership within your school district?

4) What steps do you believe are necessary to better facilitate teacher leadership within your school district?

5) Since your district has joined ELI, what changes have you seen in terms of how teacher leadership is taking place? How have teachers created these opportunities on their own? How has this affected the way teachers are compensated?

APPENDIX D

Superintendent Site Approval Letter

Dear Superintendent,

I hope that this finds you well and enjoying a successful school year. My name is Matt Curci, and I am a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am conducting a research study that examines the perceptions of teachers and building principals with regard to teacher leadership. The sample from which I seek to obtain data has the criteria of being a school district who is currently involved in the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh, and has been so for a minimum of two school years.

Please accept this letter as a written request to conduct a research study in your school district. In order to help you make an informed decision, additional details and information regarding the research methods used in this study are below:

This study will use an interview method that solicits responses from currently practicing classroom teachers and building principals utilizing the attached interview questions. Specifically, I would seek to interview approximately four to seven teachers and two to four building principals. Their responses will be recorder using a small audio recording device. After conducting the interviews, each participant will receive a transcript of their responses. In all cases, participant responses in this study will remain confidential. Selected participants in the study, if willing, will sign a consent form indicating their agreement to participate prior to their involvement in the study. They will be free to refuse to answer any question, as well as withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me through personal conversation, written communication, phone call, or email.

In addition to individual interviews, I will ask participants to submit artifacts such as memos, professional development agendas, faculty meeting agendas, or other documents that may serve as evidence of teacher leadership taking place within their school system. Sharing these documents is completely voluntary, and participants may refuse to share them at any time. All materials will be kept confidential and will be returned at the end of the study. During the duration of the study, the documents will be locked in a cabinet in my home or office.

At the conclusion of the interview process and acquisition of artifacts, a summary report will be compiled to share with you and the teacher union president of your school district. Both you and the union president would then be asked to share your reflections on the information presented for the purpose of establishing how teacher leadership may be better facilitated in schools.

Thank you for your consideration of allowing me to conduct a research study within your school district. A form to indicate your willingness to participate in the study is enclosed with this letter. If you would, please print a copy of this form on your professional letterhead, complete the information including your signature, and return it to me in the pre-addressed stamped envelope provided.

If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact me by phone or email at the information provided below:

Cell Phone: (724) 840 – 4211
Work Phone: (724) 478 – 6033
Email: curcim@apolloridge.com

Your time and cooperation is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Matthew Curci

Principal Investigator: Faculty Sponsor:
Matthew Curci   Dr. Cathy Kaufman
Doctoral Candidate, IUP   Professor Professional Studies in Education
816 Barclay Road   126 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 1570   Indiana University of Pennsylvania
(724) 840-4211   Indiana, PA 15705
                                                   Phone: (724) 357-3928

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730)

APPENDIX E

Teacher/Principal Invitation to Participate

Dear Teacher/Principal,

I hope that this finds you well and enjoying a successful school year. My name is Matt Curci, and I am a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am conducting a research study that examines the perceptions of teachers and building principals with regard to teacher leadership. The sample from which I seek to obtain data has the criteria of being a school district who is currently involved in the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh, and has been so for a minimum of two school years.

You are invited to participate in the study. In order to help you make an informed decision as whether to participate, additional details and information regarding the research methods used in this study are below:

This study will use an interview method that solicits responses from currently practicing classroom teachers and building principals utilizing the attached interview questions. Specifically, I would seek to interview you for approximately 25 to 40 minutes at a mutually agreed-upon location that is convenient for you. The interview will be recorded using a small audio recording device. After conducting the interview, you will receive a transcript of your responses. You will then have the opportunity to review the transcript to verify its accuracy, as well as communicate to me any necessary clarifications via email, phone, or personal conversation. Your responses in this study will remain confidential. If you are willing to participate in the study, you will sign a consent form indicating your agreement to participate prior to their involvement in the study. You will be free to refuse to answer any question, as well as withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me through personal conversation, written communication, phone call, or email.

In addition to individual interviews, I will ask you to submit artifacts such as memos, professional development agendas, faculty meeting agendas, or other documents that may serve as evidence of teacher leadership taking place within your school system. Sharing these documents is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to share them at any time. All materials will be kept confidential and will be returned to you at the end of the pilot study. During the duration of the study, the documents will be locked in a cabinet in my home or office.

At the conclusion of the interview process and acquisition of artifacts, a summary report will be compiled to share with the superintendent and the teacher union president of your school district. Both the superintendent and union president would then be asked to share their reflection on the information
presented for the purpose of establishing how teacher leadership may be better facilitated in schools. As stated, participants in this study will remain confidential, and the summary will not link responses to names of individuals in any way.

Please complete and return the enclosed copy of the informed consent form in the addressed envelope. If you choose not to participate, please return the form with only your name provided and the word "NO" printed on the form.

If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact me by phone or email at the information provided below:

Cell Phone: (724) 840 – 4211
Work Phone: (724) 478 – 6033
Email: curcim@apolloridge.com

Your time and cooperation is very much appreciated. Thank you considering my invitation to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

Matthew Curci

Principal Investigator: Faculty Sponsor:
Matthew Curci   Dr. Cathy Kaufman
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Indiana, PA 1570   Indiana University of Pennsylvania
(724) 840-4211   Indiana, PA 15705
                                                  Phone: (724) 357-3928

APPENDIX F

Superintendent/Teacher Association President Invitation to Participate

Dear Superintendent/Teacher Association President,

I hope that this finds you well and enjoying a successful school year. My name is Matt Curci, and I am a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am conducting a research study that examines the perceptions of teachers and building principals with regard to teacher leadership. The sample from which I seek to obtain data has the criteria of being a school district who is currently involved in the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh, and has been so for a minimum of two school years.

You are invited to participate in the study. In order to help you make an informed decision as whether to participate, additional details and information regarding the research methods used in this study are below:

This study will use an interview method that solicits responses from currently practicing classroom teachers and building principals utilizing the attached interview questions. Upon completion of the interview process, I will complete a brief narrative summarizing the results as they answer the research questions posed in my study. The names of those participating in the study, and their responses will not be linked to personal information. You will be asked to read this summary, and discuss your reflections with me in an interview lasting approximately 25-40 minutes in length. This meeting will be arranged at a time and location of your convenience. Your responses will be recorded using a small audio recording device, and transcribed shortly after the interview. You will then have the opportunity to review the transcript to verify its accuracy, as well as communicate to me any necessary clarifications via email, phone, or personal conversation. Your responses in this study will remain confidential.

If you are willing to participate in the study, you will sign a consent form indicating your agreement to participate prior to their involvement in the study. You will be free to refuse to answer any question, as well as withdraw from the study at any time by contacting me through personal conversation, written communication, phone call, or email.

Please complete and return the enclosed copy of the informed consent form in the addressed envelope. If you choose not to participate, please return the form with only your name provided and the word "NO" printed on the form.

If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact me by phone or email at the information provided below:

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Your time and cooperation is very much appreciated. Thank you considering my invitation to participate in the study.

Sincerely,

Matthew Curci

Principal Investigator: Faculty Sponsor:
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