

# Development of Professional Leadership among Teachers

**Abstract:** *A teacher leader is a teacher who is always ready to take on responsibilities other than the class teaching. Teacher leaders work in collaboration. They always keep improving their knowledge. A teacher leader is helpful, not just for students; he/she can also be beneficial for less experienced staff. To become a good teacher leader a teacher has to face many obstacles. But with his/her devotion to work he/she can overcome these barriers. The primary motive of this paper is to introduce the reader with the conditions, dimensions and obstacles which are an unbreakable part of the course of development of professional leadership in teachers.*

**Keywords:** Educator, Expertise, Curriculum, Community.

## Introduction

“Teacher leaders are teachers who successfully influence the behaviour, beliefs, or actions of others thereby increasing the capability of the student achievement and success.” (Lester, 2008)

Teacher leadership is the process by which expert educators take on roles at the classroom, district, state, or national levels to advance the profession, and improve educator effectiveness in order to increase access to great teaching and learning for all students. To maximize teacher impact on student success, accomplished teachers must have defined opportunities to share their professional knowledge and expertise with colleagues. Some teachers participate in collaborative leadership activities and some work in isolation and have few opportunities to engage in conversations on ways to improve teaching and learning. As a result of this, students ultimately miss out on the benefit of shared knowledge.

One way to increase collaboration is to establish systems of teacher leadership that formalize the sharing of expertise in order to promote professional learning throughout a school/college. Examples could include opportunities to leverage expertise by mentoring, peer observation and coaching, leading engagement with families and communities, and talking on responsibilities for curriculum improvement activities.

Teacher leaders can be curriculum developers, bid writers, mentors of new or less experienced staff with a strong link to the classroom. The important point is that teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed. Their role is to explore and try out new ideas. Some of the traits of teacher leader are given below:

- 1) Everyone knows that more minds work better than one. A teacher leader collaborate with his/her peers to give better outcomes. So he works better than those teachers who work in isolation.
- 2) A teacher leader cultivates community in the classroom. He/she wants everyone to have chance to participate and to feel respected and valued.
- 3) Teacher leaders use latest methods and strategies to teach.
- 4) Teacher leaders reflect and grow improving and updating. They are shaped by assessments and data.

- 5) They see the big picture behind the education systems and the value of education quality in the world.
- 6) Great teachers are tenacious about learning how to improve instruction.
- 7) They are organizers, initiators and mediators.
- 8) A teacher leader makes use of latest techniques and methods of teaching.

Teacher leaders are not just beneficial for the students. New or less experienced teacher can also take much advantage from them. They influence the professional growth of other teachers. They influence the Change Environment in which teachers work by providing opportunities to attend professional and access to other professional resources and by supporting and encouraging teachers to experiment in their classrooms. They provide input into the External Domain of the teacher, for example, through engaging in professional conversations with teachers, reflecting on practice with teachers, or by teaching model lessons.

A variety of conditions are necessary to support and sustain teachers in leadership positions. According to Liberman, vision, structure, and skills are all essential to the success of new teacher roles and responsibilities. It is important that teacher leadership roles be part of an overall vision and set of values that accepts and expects teachers to participate in leadership. When new roles are unrelated to a broad vision of teacher participation, leadership position do not receive the systematic support necessary for success and change. Teachers need structure for their work. Although the structure will vary according to the school and community context, it must bring legitimacy to the new role and facilitate the understanding that knowledgeable and well respected teachers can provide leadership.

Three dimensions of professional development of teacher leader are proposed for attention. These dimensions are content, delivery mode and measures of success. First, the content of teacher leader's professional development depends in part heavily on how the role of teacher leader is conceived- teacher, administrator, and/or transformational manager of learning organisations. There is increasing importance placed in the content of professional development of teacher leaders on values. Cladwell, for example, identifies six values that underpin what he calls a new sense of the public good- access, equity, choice, growth, efficiency, and harmony.

Second a wide variety of delivery modes of teacher leader professional development can be identified, including:

- where (on-site, elsewhere, distance, some combination)
- how (course involving lecture, tutorial, problem based learning, some combination, mentorship, apprenticeship and whether offered full time, part time, in flexible mode)
- when (at times most conducive to participants, schools, employer and/or to maximise the transfer learning)

Third, and finally, measures of the success of teacher leader professional development are not widely or readily available. Such measures might include:

- feedback from participants, course designer and course provider on the relevance of content, quality of delivery mode and usefulness of the measurement of success;
- feedback from multiple sources (participants, employers, colleagues, staff, students).

Teacher leadership has to overcome many obstacles. Teacher leaders need support to overcome stubborn barriers created by the norms of school/college culture- autonomy, egalitarianism, deference to seniority.

Becoming a teacher leader promises to reduce isolation. When they begin their career, many of today's new teachers expect to work in teams but are dismayed to find themselves working alone day after day.

Teacher leader's roles are seldom well defined. Principals often regard teacher leaders as a source of extra help in school/college that is strapped for human resources. As a result, many teacher leaders spend their as apprentice or assistants in administration- supervising the cafeteria, subbing for absent staff, overseeing the logistic of testing rather than using their instructional expertise to improve teaching at the school/college.

Teacher leaders' efforts to share their expertise can also be undermined by the culture of teaching. In fact, the professional norms of teaching present a daunting challenge to teacher leaders who are asked to improve their colleagues' instruction.

Teacher leaders have been challenged ethically to make difficult decisions while coping with high stakes pressures from political leaders and the public, along with school accountability legislation.

Teacher's role in defining and implementing school/college change initiatives is becoming more recognized and more formalised through the creation of teacher leadership roles. Researchers and practitioners must do a better job of investing and implementing their leadership as a professional development strategy. As the financial situation of schools/colleges continues to deteriorate, educators can ill afford to spend money on professional development initiatives that will not provide measurable results for students. Thus, rather than continuing to waste money on providing ineffective professional development to a broad number teachers, it would be wiser to provide fewer teachers with more substantial and effective professional development that we know to be effective.

The development of teacher leaders is a form of professional development. Investing resources in the development of teacher leaders will not only provide short term gains in students achievement scores, it can also provide lasting gains in schools'/colleges' capacity to learn and adapt to the dynamic circumstances and issues they face each year.

## References

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