

A DEVELOPMENT OF A TEACHER LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR GIFTED EDUCATION IN THAILAND

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Abstract: Teacher leadership was examined in the context of gifted education in Thailand for a development of an effective framework. An explanatory mixed method design was employed involving both quantitative and qualitative data collection from content analysis; and survey, interview and document from teachers. Results revealed that there were three major areas and nine attributes leading to effective teacher leadership. School leadership, teacher leadership and principles of learning are major considerations for teacher leadership to succeed in gifted education. Findings revealed that the gifted high school under study demonstrated good overall teacher leadership. Two significant areas strongly permeating were teacher collaboration, and teachers' relationship and positive influence on one another. Two areas that were perceived not strongly present by teachers at the school were distributed leadership and professional learning community. The findings suggest that the framework can serve as a guideline for both gifted and general education in Thailand. Since the school is the country's national high school for the gifted; the prevailing teacher leadership practices currently found can to some extent be a legitimate framework to emulate.

Keywords: Teacher Leadership, Gifted Education, Principles of Learning

Introduction

In many countries, the concept of teacher leadership has received much attention from the education circle as it holds promising potential in leading school change. Economic growth, social expectations and political forces together combined has created a climate in which educational reform is expected especially in the age of high accountability. Central to this, is the increased pressures and demands on teachers. Wallace (2002) stated that evidence from research on school's effectiveness and school's improvement has delineated that effective leaders exert a powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and the achievement of students. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) posited that findings have shown that even though effective school leaders do bring about a significant influence on student learning outcome, it is the actions of teachers that have acted as the intermediary agents. Briefly stated, the contribution of principal

leadership to school effectiveness and improvement is overshadowed by that of teacher leadership (Wallace, 2002). Barth, 2013, reiterated in an interview with *Educational Leadership* that a school's community should be made-up of many leaders: principal, teachers, students, and parents, and 'our business ought to be to promote profound levels of learning in school – and teacher leadership is one of our most powerful assets for doing so.' In an earlier study, Barth also stressed on how schools badly need the leadership of teachers if they are to improve. He asserted that teachers become active learners in an environment where they are leaders. When teachers lead, principals' own capacities get stretched; resulting in higher student learning amidst a democratic community of learners, and the overall impact is that schools benefit from better decisions (Barth, 2001a). The roles teachers play must therefore not be confined to being mere "representatives" of change, rather as "leaders" who dare to enact and initiate change, especially in gifted education where there are higher stakes. The metaphor asserted by Katzenmeyer and Moller in 1996 in their best-selling book "*Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Leadership Development for Teachers*" sends a strong message – that the dormant status of teachers should not be undermined, as when empowered (if aroused) can wield mighty power.

Leadership Theories

Distributed Leadership

A popular leadership theory that supports teacher leadership and has received much empirical support in the last few years is distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; Harris, 2002; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003). Distributed leadership promotes and engages fellow teachers in collegial ambience and is non-traditional leading. The role of the traditional leader is re-conceptualized, and involves the participation of multiple people who take effort in guiding and mobilizing others to bring about effective changes in and beyond the classroom. Leadership is therefore spread to multiple people and tasks are accomplished through building on each other's experiences and knowledge (Spillane et al., 2001). When this happens, the school leader or principal continues to be ultimately responsible for the overall performance of the school, but the role of the principal changes. McGhan (2002) stated that school leadership is a fluid relationship between multiple leaders and followers, involving varied situational and social contexts, and Harris (2002) plainly put it as 'maximizing the human capacity within the organization'

Leithwood and Reil (2003) reiterated that 'research suggests that teacher leaders can help other teachers to embrace goals, to understand the changes that are needed

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