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Transformational Teacher Leadership in Rural Schools

Kirk David Anderson

University of New Brunswick

In this paper, the author explores the rural school context and its teacher leaders as a third transformational leadership prototype adding to Leithwood and Jantzi's (1999) two transformational leadership prototypes of females and new teachers in the elementary school. The author helps illuminate new understanding of rural schools and their highly interactive decision making styles where teacher leaders are a source of creativity development of unique forms of leadership. If researchers focus on teachers as leaders in rural schools, specifically those who operate outside of traditional leadership roles, there exists a promising area of new understanding for educational leadership as transformational teacher leadership.

Introduction

Transformational leadership and teacher leadership are not new in our literature, however transformational leadership is rare and transformational leadership by teachers is almost unknown. In revealing distinctive sources of transformational leadership Leithwood and Jantzi (1997) concluded that there are two transformational leadership prototypes. These two transformational leadership prototypes, newer teacher and feminine teacher leadership styles, in the context of the elementary school, provide fertile ground for transformational leadership and are inclusive of teacher leadership.

I would posit that the less restrictive context of the rural school, being relatively role free of formal leadership roles, is source for an unreported third transformational leadership prototype. The third transformational leadership prototype, *the transformational teacher leader in the context of the rural school*, exists in at least one of the rural schools which was part of a larger study involving five other schools. These schools were going through a systematic intervention for school improvement planning and facilitation in one province of Eastern Canada. This reform process called for a greater involvement of local stakeholders, especially teachers, in decision making. The more interactive decision making process required changes in leadership styles for principals from a traditional hierarchical norm to more distributive form. This transition provided a rich context for the emergence of many forms of teacher leadership, and in some cases may have enabled the emergence of transformational leadership from teachers (Anderson, 2002a, 2002b, 2004; Hart, 1994).

To support this position, this paper will draw on research based on the answers to two questions: what is the nature of teacher leadership, and what are the influences on teacher leadership? Based on the answers to the first two questions a third question is discussed: is there a case for transformational teacher leadership in one of these rural schools?

This article is organized in four sections with related sub-sections: First is a discussion of the literature informing

the issue and why this area merits attention. The second section highlights the research design and methods used to gather and interpret the data. The third section is used to present the findings and discuss the questions: what is the nature of, and influences on teacher leadership in rural schools. The discussion of the findings is then extended to put forward the proposition that there was a third transformational leadership prototype-the rural teacher leader in at least one of the schools studied. Finally, in the fourth section are the conclusions.

Review of the literature

This review will outline and review our shifting organizational understandings and decision-making, leading to the need for teacher leadership and how in some cases teacher leadership is seen as transformational. In addition, support is given for the identification of at least two transformational leadership prototypes which are related to teachers as leaders.

The Changing Context for Leadership and Decision Making

The conceptualization of efficiently run organizations has seen considerable and shifting emphasis, from seeking a science of management (Greenfield, 1986), to school improvement from external innovations, to school effectiveness supportive of internal correlates or dimensions (Rutter, 1979; Lezotte, 1986) to more current understandings of complexity (Wheatley, 1994) which has evolved into present and significant entrenchment of professional learning communities (PLCs) as a means to improve schools (DuFour and Eaker 1998; Williams, Brien, Sprague, and Sullivan 2008). With these changes in organizational paradigms comes changing understanding or operationization of shared decision making as teacher leadership (Anderson, 2002b). Coupled with the changing organizational dynamic is a growing understanding of the complexity of the leadership-followership dynamic involved in teaching as the 'profession' grows in complexity and specialization while student populations (and society for that

matter) increase in diversity. The changing organizational understanding, increasing professionalism of teachers, diversity of students, and increasing complexity of schools negates managerialism and supports the cry for school principals to be *leaders of teachers who are themselves leaders*. As Murphy (2005) concluded:

We have also learned that leadership is as much a property of the school and its culture as it is a dimension of administrative roles. In the current teacher leadership scenario it is not simply the principal that must be the instructional leader but also teachers by going wider and deeper: wider in extending their leadership to school wide concerns and deeper in using this school wide influence to increase teaching efficacy in the classroom. The central place of teacher leadership in the school improvement play has been identified (p. vii).

This leads to the question: While teacher leadership is central in improving school, are we extending our understanding of transformational and teacher leadership to teacher centric forms of teacher transformational leadership?

Teachers and Transformational Leadership

York-Barr and Duke (2004) reviewed findings of empirically based teacher leadership literature from the previous 20 years and argued that while, “many authors readily assert [the teacher leaders]’s importance and described its various forms, they usually fail to define it” (p. 260). For reference, Beachum and Denith (2004) do define teacher leadership, but mostly in the context of more traditional leadership practice, “those who are willing to work alongside building principals to envision a better future ... and are endowed with opportunities and authority for their unique insights” (p. 277-280). In the context of this study, teacher leadership is simply and succinctly seen as the process of influencing and direction setting of one teacher toward another. This may be the result of formal leadership roles, or informal relationships (Hart, 1994) and indeed may be interactive and reciprocal as a leader can become a follower given a particular context (Anderson, 2002b, 2004). A distinction for teacher leadership in the absence of formal roles is that fellow teachers attribute leadership to them as *teacher leaders*. In this sense the teacher leader is more readily recognized in the context of the school as they exhibit leadership characteristics more consistently and more often than their respective counterparts.

In advocating the role of the teacher leader in the reform of schools Taylor, Webb, and Jones (2004) argued that, “a teacher’s power is essential both within and beyond the walls of the classroom ...[to] transcend the traditional boundaries of professional identity and replace traditional attempts at renewal” (p. 206). Treslan (2006) argued that “if

our schools are capable of functioning as intelligent systems, then we have to acknowledge the need for a new and critical leadership both in the school and in the classroom. Doing so might affect not only our preconceived notions about learning, but our current leadership paradigms as well [sic]” (p. 58). He discussed the possibility of teachers being transformational in the classroom context and asserted that “transformational leadership by teachers does exist in the classroom where effective teaching is practiced” (p. 62). The assertion that transformational teacher leadership exists in the classroom seems plausible, but the larger question of whether transformational teacher leadership exist outside the classroom, in the larger school context, has not been answered.

Transformational Leadership Prototypes

There is significant literature on transformational leadership which is focused on administrators, but few references to transformational leadership with any significance emphasis to teachers as transformational leaders. In one of these scant references, supporting a rarely found teacher leadership based context for transformational teacher leadership, Leithwood and Jantzi (1997) concluded that there were two transformational leadership prototypes which were more likely to be evident in the context of elementary schools:

Transformational Leadership Prototype 1: Women teachers are more likely than men teachers to possess leader prototypes, which include female traits, and behaviours, and transformational leadership practices (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Transformational Leadership Prototype 2: Younger and less experienced teachers are likely to possess leader prototypes, which include transformational leadership practices (Lord et al., 1986; Mann, 1959, p. 318-319).

Building on this research, Anderson (2002a, 2004, 2008) argued that in rural schools, teacher leaders influenced these schools to the point that, in some cases, the entire organization was transformed. The decision making context in schools having likely support for transformational teacher leadership and prototypes is apparent in the PLC context with decision making styles that are highly interactive or distributive leadership. Spillane (2005) described distributed leadership practice based on less formal roles as, “Leaders act in situations that are defined by others’ actions. From a distributed perspective, it is in these interactions that leadership practice is constructed” (p. 146). Anderson (2004, 2008) suggested that the distributive leadership model (highly interactive with less formal boundaries) of leadership reciprocity (mutual and highly interactive leadership influences between principals, teacher leaders, and teachers) is a likely context for the emergence

of transformational teacher leadership. This suggests that the rural teacher leader is a third transformational leadership prototype.

In this regard, our understanding of the nature of teacher leadership needs to push forward into deeper and wider contexts; deeper to reveal a promising area of new understanding for educational leadership, and wider in the realization that researchers need to focus on teachers as leaders outside of traditional leadership roles. Such research can help de-center the principal as the focus of transformational leadership and identify an understudied area important to school improvement and change, notably, the ability of some rural school teacher leaders to be *transformational teacher leaders*.

Research Design and Methodology

This study is specifically focused on one case: a school and its five respondents as the most likely source of transformational teacher leadership but references data gathered as part of a larger qualitative case study of teacher leadership in six rural schools (Anderson, 2002a). The schools and their leadership were influenced by a systematic intervention in one province of Canada as part of its reform and restructuring climate calling for a greater involvement of local stakeholders, especially teachers, in decision making. The new decision making process required changes in leadership from formal roles and hierarchical styles to more informal teacher leadership roles and distributive forms of decision making, thereby providing a rich context for teacher leadership.

A unique element of this qualitative case study is that these were smaller rural schools (student populations ranging from 65 to 350) and as such did not have many of the traditional and formal teacher leadership roles, such as department heads or curriculum leaders. Indeed some did not have a vice principal and all the principals also had teaching responsibilities. This rural and somewhat role free context addresses a concern raised by Ryan (1999) that teacher leadership studies need to reduce the impact of formal leadership positions on the sample as they often reflect the practices of the formal leadership that appointed them thus replicating traditional leadership styles. Ryan argued that formal teacher leaders and administrators were often too readily identified as leaders to the detriment of other influential sources of teacher leadership. It is in this setting I posit that in a less restrictive context with relative freedom from formal leadership roles, the rural school reveals a third transformational leadership prototype--the teacher leader in the rural school.

Each school is a distinct case, and within each case, respondents selected for the study were purposefully chosen to reflect a mixture of perspectives related to teacher leadership. In each school five respondents were interviewed: the principal, two teacher leaders (selected based on ranking of relative influence by fellow teachers),

and two teachers who also nominated the teacher leaders as leaders. Each respondent participated in a semi-structured interview lasting between forty to sixty minutes. Each respondent was asked questions about teacher leadership following an interview guide developed for this purpose framed around the two research questions: what is the nature of teacher leadership in schools and what are the influences on teacher leadership in schools?

Each interview was transcribed and the transcriptions were sorted into idea statements. To find generalizations the idea statements were coded and developed into categories and themes. The idea statement coding was periodically recycled as a means of constant comparative and internal validity while the final numbers of ideas and statements were sorted into categories and ranked based on the frequency of occurrence. An individual respondent's repetition of an idea was not counted in frequency. The larger study of the six schools relied heavily on frequency, categories, and tables to present findings as well as a more qualitative and descriptive interpretation on this data set. This study however, is focused on one case (Tableland School) and is presented more thematically aiming to be more descriptive and interpretive with respect to the two primary research questions (the nature of teacher leadership and the influences on teacher leadership). The discussion is intended to argue that in one of the six schools studied, at least one was a source of transformational teacher leadership, hence supporting the teacher leader in the rural school as the third transformational leadership prototype.

Findings

Tableland School

Tableland School is located in a rural and remote region of Canada. The traditional means of livelihood for residents had been resource-based industries, however, in recent years, a decline in the traditional resource based industry meant out-migration for many residents and their children. A new national park in the region has been established and local residents were attempting to take advantage of potential opportunities in the tourism industry.

This school has reached out to forge partnerships with outside organizations. For example, they established a community cable channel operating from the school servicing the community. They worked with the national park to arrange for a cross-country ski trail groomer to service cross-country ski trails in exchange for support in its ski programme. This school also has a spectacular record in badminton, having won the provincial championship in the high school sports league. It was an active and dynamic school with much to be proud of and a good resource for someone researching teacher leadership in schools.

The Nature of Teacher Leadership at Tableland School

As mentioned earlier, the nature of the schools suggested that teacher leadership roles in the schools of the larger sample would be characterized by fewer formal leadership roles and therefore a rich source for more teacher initiated forms of leaders. This was particularly the case in Tableland School. Respondents referred to this in discussing the few administrative tasks and formal leadership responsibilities that existed as well as roles they saw as being assumed and created by teachers.

Administrative Tasks and Formal Leadership Roles

Two teacher leaders were identified as being on committees and organizing events. One teacher leader referred to the absence of department heads and how this was addressed through the school improvement initiative saying, "There are no department heads. We've had committees of teachers to develop planning. We've had a science committee, a math committee and a language committee." As to organizing events, the male teacher leader commented that in this school, this type of activity has often been his role.

I've run a lot of assemblies over the years when we have student get-togethers for one thing or another to discuss something or to recognize some contributions students have played. I'm quite often the one who's asked to run the assembly, to do speaking, or to do the motivation, or whatever.

Because there were few, if any, formal roles and no department heads, teachers were asked to comment on the nature of their leadership roles. They raised responsibilities quite often such as the curriculum committees referred to above. Respondents also discussed leadership responsibilities with respect to district and association involvement as they were practiced in the school setting. The lack of formal leadership roles enabled a creative response to this need. The leadership need was met with the corresponding ability for teachers to create leadership roles based on a mixture of the schools' need as well as personal agency.

Leadership Roles Assumed by Teachers

Hart (1994) discussed *role making* and *role taking* in relation to how teachers performed leadership roles. Role making is seen as teachers assuming a leadership role, changing it as a result of the manner in which they action the role. Role taking refers to teachers assuming such roles without changing the role in any significant manner. In analyzing the data as to the respondents' perceptions of teacher leadership roles there was a distinct difference in how teachers acted in leadership roles beyond simply taking and making these roles. More consistent with the nature of transformational leadership and the distributive nature of

decision making in these rural schools, there was a third teacher leadership role as some teacher leaders actually 'created' new roles. In the context of this study a slight reframing of teacher leadership roles is appropriate as: role taking (assuming), role making (extending), and role creation.

In assuming roles, referred to by all of the respondents in Tableland School, one teacher leader referred to the other and said, "He will certainly take on roles that probably he's not used to, but within any amount of time he can certainly do them." These leaders would modify or extend some roles as suggested by comments from four respondents. In this case, the male teacher leader spoke about assuming roles and modifying them to suit his way of doing things. He said, "The extracurricular, I think, and a lot of any type of leadership that I have, stems from that I think again that's my personal choice to do that I have my own way of doing it. I think maybe that others look at that as being a type of a leadership role." The female leader gained recognition for actually creating the role of technology specialist, as an area in which the school was gaining recognition regionally as other school personnel, and even the district office staff, sought her out for her expertise. The female teacher nominator referred to her and commented,

She has definitely created her role, which is very evident in the last two years with the computer and the technology. She's created roles for herself and done amazing things with that subject area. A lot of it is being done after school hours, night times and weekends, but again, I think that's her initiative.

Influences on Teacher Leadership

While one can anticipate there are many influences on teacher leadership in any context, in this particular context there were two key influences. In particular these influences emanated from shared (distributive leadership) decision making at the school and the mutual influences between teachers and the principal (leadership reciprocity).

A Distributive (Interactive) Leadership Model

Of the six schools studied, two schools were identified as being 'distributive' in respect to the leadership relationships between teacher leaders, principals and other teachers (Anderson, 2002a; 2004). These two schools presented the most interactivity and widely distributed shared decision making relationships between teacher leaders, principals, and other teachers. Most of the schools identified the administrator as being the locus of decision making and it was from this principal centered context that decision making was shared with teachers. In one school, Tableland School, there was little indication of others

having decided as sharing decision making occurred with more of a teacher centered focus of decision making, often through consultation but also by letting teachers formulate the decision. In the teacher centric context of Tableland School, the administrator was able to consult with staff but liked to function in an environment that mixed a combination of delegation and volunteering. As the principal stated, quite happily, "I'm a delegator."

The main vehicle for exchanging ideas and sharing decision making was through teachers shaping decisions, although teachers were not afraid to act independently and formulate decisions. The main vehicle for this were staff meetings and consultations by teachers with the principal, as made known by the female teacher leader through her comment, "I feel like I have as fair role as the other teachers involved in the staff meeting. Everybody has their say; everybody usually looks at it and comes to a consensus of what should be done." This highly interactive set of relationships managed to distribute decision making in a less hierarchical and continuously engaged manner with the extensive involvement of many teachers (Daresh, 2007).

Leadership Reciprocity: Mutual Leadership Influences

The mutual and reciprocal relationships between teacher leaders and the principal is critically important in understanding the influences on teacher leadership as well as the nature of teacher leadership in schools. A false prediction suggests that respondents, given rural schools smaller numbers of staff and lack of formal roles, would be aware of their mutual relationships, but there was evidence to suggest there were differences in this perception.

Principal's Influence on Teacher Leaders

In discussing his influence on teacher leadership in Tableland School, the principal saw himself as supporting an enabling type of environment. He supported teacher leaders by, seeing to their interest and welfare if need be, and delegating responsibilities to other staff members. He stated that "without the flexibility and freedom to operate ... a teacher can't be a leader. By trying different things you're also giving them some freedom to do it."

The teacher leaders, while seeing the principal as influencing teacher leadership, did not necessarily agree. While one teacher leaders spoke positively of the principal's influence saying, "If he sees that a person can really take a task and go with it, he'll just give them all the loose strings and let them go." However, in contrast, the other teacher leader felt that his leadership was more of an individual decision and commented,

I think, in this school, that people must decide themselves. The administration does designate certain roles to teachers, I guess, formally assigning roles to teachers for things that they're accountable for or things that they must do. I don't feel personally that there's been any big amount of influence

by the administration, by the principal, in terms of any type of leadership that I've taken upon myself to do. It's been mainly roles that I've taken on myself.

Also, one of the nominators felt that the principal could do more as she said, "I think more responsibility could be given to teachers." In this school the principal saw himself as solidly behind and in support of teacher leaders, yet there was some awareness that there might be more that could be done.

Teacher Leaders' Influence on the Principal

In referring to teacher leaders' influence on the principal teacher nominators did not comment. The principal and teacher leaders, however, did. The principal felt that the teacher leaders had a great deal of influence on him, as he stated,

On me personally, obviously it makes it a bit easier because in the particular job that I have, it's also very, very time demanding and I think it's an understanding there. Anybody who would be in that position would have a great influence on me because they're the kind of people that when I want something done and I really want it done well or I want to make sure it's done, I can go to her. I know it'll be done.

The female teacher leader reflected, saying, "I find the administration usually comes to me or I go to them and if there's a problem, we could work on something." Notwithstanding differences in some perceptions, there is no doubt that the leaders and the principal were aware of their mutual influence, even if the nominators were more silent about it.

The Case for Transformational Teacher Leadership at Tableland School

Anderson (2004, 2008) referred to the larger sample of six schools and outlined three models of decision making and leadership active in the schools: three school were considered *buffered* (principal led, traditional and hierarchical), one school was *contested* (teachers leaders often contested decision making with the new and struggling principal), and two were *distributive* (highly interactive decision making). It is in Tableland School, one of the two distributive model schools, that the nature of teacher leadership reached the critical momentum to be deemed transformational teacher leadership. In this particular school the two teacher leaders were able to leverage their position on committees and areas of expertise to gain the commitment from colleagues, including the principal, to transform their school.

In the search for the third transformational leadership prototype the "Distributive Leadership Model" enables

transformational teacher leadership as it makes room for those schools with few or no formal roles, and relies heavily on extending their role from the classroom as a means of change. This means that the source of influence for teacher leaders is teacher centric transformation, relying largely on professional expertise and instructional leadership (Anderson, 2004).

As seen in Table 1 below, Tableland School’s respondents were well aware of the leadership as exhibited by Tableland’s teacher leaders. The first teacher leader interviewed (Leader 1 in Table 1) was a female fitting one of the transformational leadership prototypes (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1997). While her professional training was as an elementary teacher her technology skills came from her own efforts. She had some training through seminars and workshops, but the comprehensive nature of her knowledge in this area was gained mostly as a result of being self-taught. The female teacher leader was a former all around leader who strove to excel in a specific area, having built a formalized role as a leading technology teacher in the school. She had excelled to the point where she was influencing the district and the province with her expertise in technology as they consulted with her in designing new programs.

This teacher leader was not loud in the sense one could hear her in the corridors, but when she spoke or offered an opinion, other staff members tuned her in. She was also the source of answers to questions about different aspects of activities as others were seeking her advice. She recognized her role as a leader, but was modest about it. Consistently with this mild-mannered and self-assured approach to her work, she described leadership as having, “integrity, honesty, being hard working, confident in what you are doing with the belief that if your goals are realistic then there’s no obstacle.”

The second teacher interviewed (Leader 2 in Table 1) was a male, early to mid-career (close to the one of the other transformational leadership prototypes), physical education and French language teacher. He led from his more traditional role as a physical education teacher and extended this to coordinate sports and other related activities. His teams had achieved significant successes, having been provincial champions in sports such as cross-country running and badminton. He described teacher leaders as, “people who have high standards. They have goals to reach and you see them working hard to achieve them. People [who] are confident, professional and thorough in what they do. I like leadership-type people who don’t seek recognition and glory for what they do, but they do it because it’s something they think needs to be done.”

Both teacher leaders were similar in that while they could speak out, they chose a quieter, more positive supporting role. They excelled in leading by example in giving their time, showing dedication and a determination to complete tasks. These tasks were both undertaken as a result of their own initiatives as well as those that were delegated.

The first nominator interviewed (Nominator 1 in Table 1) was a male, mid-career high school social studies teacher. Unlike the other four respondents in Tableland School, this teacher had been moved from school to school in the past few years as a result of layoffs. He had been a teacher in this school before and was more recently transferred back. He did not live in the community served by the school, but drove one hour back and forth to work. When asked to describe teacher leadership he stated that it takes “dedication and hard work I suppose, but also knowing when to put time into things. ... knowing that it’s something that’s got to be said or something that’s got to be done and needs to be done—just going the extra mile.”

Table 1

Teacher Leadership in Tableland School

| Tableland School | Gender | Experience | Assignment | Key Ideas About Teacher Leadership |
|------------------|--------|------------|--|--|
| Principal | Male | Y:14 years | Principal and Enterprise Education Teacher | Positive attitudes, Proactive, Dedicated and Time commitment. |
| Leader 1 | Female | Z:23 years | Classroom Teacher and Technology | Integrity, Honesty, Hard working, Confident and Belief in realistic goals. |
| Leader 2 | Male | Y:15 years | French and Physical Education | People with high standards, Hard workers, Confident and Professional. |
| Nominator 1 | Male | Y:11 years | Social Studies | Dedicated, Hard working, Giving time when needed. |
| Nominator 2 | Female | Y:16 years | Elementary Teacher | Dedicated, Reasonable and Considerate of others. |

Respondents from this school knew what they perceived to be leadership, more specifically what they deemed to be leadership from teachers, as they had a consistent point of reference to this view. The sense that teacher leadership involved dedication was widespread. These teacher leaders followed through with their initiatives and were committed to working towards goals, while giving the time and effort required.

The principal saw himself as having enabled teacher leadership in this school. He expressed his view that: It's a vision of the school that looks at the staff as important cogs in the wheel that'll keep it going. If you can explain to everybody that they are very important and they have an important role to play, you can create a family type of atmosphere among the staff, then I think everybody in his or her own little way will become a leader. Some won't be able to achieve at the level of others because it's not in their nature but with some responsibility, shared responsibility, an opportunity to take something and go with and have it work for them, I really think you can take anybody and build a leader over time.

While the principal described himself as a 'delegator' and an active supporter of his teacher leaders, opinions of the other respondents were divided in the sense of the principal's influence on the teacher leaders. Leader 1 saw the administration (principal) as supportive. She felt an important part of her leadership was, "the administration having confidence in what you're doing and giving you as much help, guidance, and room to do what you want to do as you needed." In contrast, Leader 2 addressed the principal's influences on him with less enthusiasm and said, "He has little influence on me personally." He spoke of the school and community context and stated that, "It's a good school, a good place to be a leader. If you do it, do it the right way, you get what you expect from students and they look upon you as a leader. I think it extends past the school and into the community. The community expects it and they want it from us."

There are at least three points to be noted here. The first was that if anyone chose to come forward and show leadership consistent with the principal's vision, the principal supported him or her. Second, the principal was open to modifications if he deemed them to be beneficial to the school. The third was that the teacher leaders had significant influence on other teachers. While opinions vary as to the degree of openness for teacher leadership opportunities, it seems that opportunities to lead were open to everyone.

Teachers were encouraged through committees, school retreats, and other mechanisms to assess the school and make action plans to improve the school. These teachers were active in many areas and the school had an extensive committee structure, which reflected the principal's assertion that he was a delegator. The committee structure was developed as part of a school improvement process. A

team from this school were trained as facilitators and tasked to assist their school develop a plan for the future. In conjunction with the school district facilitators, Tableland's staff and leadership team initiated a series of activities and assessments to capture an image of the school. Part of this was a retreat for teachers and parents to gain further insight into the school and the future directions.

This process produced a collection of committees and action groups, which made critical decisions and plans for school growth. For example, the decision was made to focus on selected sports such as volleyball, badminton, and cross-country running. Other committees were created to oversee curriculum areas such as mathematics and science. One of the recognized concerns was a shortage of funds and that other partners would have to be found to make school changes possible. This process produced results. The community recreation commission provided funding for a school-operated community-based television channel, which the technology teacher (Leader 1) led as part of the vision to better embrace technology in this school. The Enterprise Education class managed the community channel and proceeds were used to fund such school programs as sports and technology. Other partnerships resulted in the improvement of physical education. As part of a deal with a National Park, the school arranged for community volunteers to act as groomer-operators (people who operate a machine to keep the cross country ski trail in good condition) in exchange for cross country ski equipment. Adding value to this exchange the school rented the 'park provided' cross-country skis for additional revenue.

Why did this school have such success as compared to others? Part of it was due to the nature of the teacher leader relationships to the administrative leadership in this school. There were few formal leadership roles. There was a principal and a vice principal. The process did not find the pitfalls that are characteristic of the traditional, more formal leadership roles. The school was in a transition from two schools to one, with a new administration at the time of the initiation of the process. It was fertile ground that was nurtured well and it had taken root. Like roots, it was no longer easy to see (and even harder to remove), but the initiatives can be seen like leaves on a tree. In this regard, the relationship of this principal and the teacher leaders is best described as distributive. There was a fluidity of ideas and opportunities for leaders to come forward and be supported. While disputed by some, the principal saw his role as offering support to teacher leaders in their efforts, while defending a widely supported and active school improvement process.

The school improvement process was a professional learning community model which transformed the decision making relationships, thus allowing teacher leaders to change their school. This foundational change contributed to a contextual setting for the emergence of the more transformational leader and indeed another transformational

leadership prototype. In the case of this school, it was not necessarily the principal. The teacher leaders not only showed the routine exercise of teacher leadership, but coupled with the school improvement framework, carried their own compelling vision. This encouraged and enabled others around them to transform a relatively marginal performing school into one that excelled in selected areas. Tableland School may have displayed leadership from teacher leaders to a level that was actually transformational that is, transformational teacher leadership.

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbeck (1999) identified eight dimensions of transformational leadership as (a) identifying and articulating a vision, (b) fostering the acceptance of group decision making goals, (c) providing an appropriate role model, (d) high performance expectations, (e) providing individual support, (f) proving intellectual stimulation, (g) contingent reward, and (h) management by exception. With the exception of the last two, the first six of these dimensions capture important qualities of teacher leaders. Indeed, as seen in Table 2, connecting the respondents' key ideas about teacher leadership from Table 1 to the teacher leadership friendly' dimensions of transformational leadership support that Tableland's teacher leaders displayed many of the transformational leadership dimensions outlined by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbeck (1999). Arguably, Tableland School is an example of a case in which teacher leadership reached a level that could be considered transformational. Tableland School was exceptional in this regard, based on the larger study, and considered to be the best source of transformational teacher leadership (Anderson, 2004).

Comments made by teacher leader respondents, spoke of many related issues, but particularly significant was the recognition and emphasis of teacher leaders as being confident, determined, outspoken, and knowledgeable. One was left with the definite realization that teacher leaders had

a message as to how their schools should work, what they wished to do, and used many opportunities to develop a compelling vision of their own, and with others. It was not necessarily the result of outside or internal initiatives but sometimes could be the result of an individual interest and initiative on the part of the teacher leader who created a role to fill a need.

The transformational teacher leader fostered the acceptance of group goals. They shared leadership with others and recognized their role as team players. Also, teacher leaders and others were aware that the staff listened to their opinions. In this sense they accepted and influenced consensus although they quite often shaped it and would sway the focus of discussions at staff meetings.

Teacher leaders in the context of this school were recognized as good or strong teachers. In fact modeling valued practices, such as leading by example and giving time were among the most mentioned teacher leadership practices. They were involved in their school and community, and often had a history of involvement in the teacher association. In some cases teacher leaders were influential in the school district as well. In addition, they had success with students. Teacher leaders were considered dependable and determined with respect to their activities.

In practicing individual support an important teacher centric relationship occurred as teacher leaders were found to be more accessible and easier to relate to by other teachers, the principal, or could be expected of formal teacher leader roles such as department heads. In this study, teacher leader's orientation to people pointed to a sensitivity toward others. They were caring, approachable, and had a genuine interest in others. This was not always perceived as the case for the principal and department heads. Having formal authority they were seen with more reservation by teachers needing help, or in reflecting teachers' perspectives.

Table 2

The Nature of Transformational Teacher Leadership

| Transformational Leadership Dimensions | Related Teacher Leadership Categories |
|--|--|
| Identifying and articulating a vision | Outspokenness, Enthusiasm, Confidence & Being Knowledgeable |
| Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals | Confronting Issues, Sharing Leadership, Relationships |
| Providing and appropriate role model | Modelling Valued Practices Responsibility, Visibility, & Risk Taking |
| High performance expectations | Well Implemented, Impact on students |
| Providing intellectual stimulation | Mentoring and Communication |
| Providing individual support | Orientation and Being Supportive |

In terms of transformational teacher leadership, teacher leaders provided intellectual stimulation. Respondents referenced ideas, new teachers with new knowledge, older teachers with experience, and the influence that such intellectual stimulation brought to bear on teachers in their practice. The six dimensions of teacher leadership were applied in this school in such a manner that teacher leaders could influence the school with such impact as to change it fundamentally.

Conclusion

It is in the distributive leadership style school that I found a rather unique phenomenon of transformational teacher leadership. Tableland's teacher leaders could exert enough influence from their largely peer attributed teacher leadership roles to change the schools' goals supporting Tableland School as a source of the third prototype of transformational leadership: the rural school teacher leader.

Tableland School displayed a distributive relationship between teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators. They managed to distribute decision making in a highly distributive manner with the extensive involvement of many teachers. This was a more typical transformational leadership which enabled greater teacher leadership (Anderson, 2004; Gronn, 1996; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbeck, 1997; 1999) and higher levels of shared decision making (Anderson, 2002b; Taylor & Taskkattori, 1997). Shared decision making was at the high end of participation in any continuum of teacher decision making as teachers were extensively involved in school decision making (Anderson, 2002b) making it distributive leadership (Daresh, 2007; Spillane, 2005). They were involved in areas they found meaningful so there was little sense that they were being co-opted. Such teachers recognized the necessity that many voices must be heard and in this way they were more connected with both the external and internal contexts of decision making. Teacher leadership and influence on school decision making could come from any individual or groups on staff. The principal and teacher leaders were quite visible and, to varying degrees, all sources were interrelated. It was a healthy environment for transformational teacher leadership and typical of this school.

Finally, in the third transformational leadership prototype, the creative utilization of informal teacher leadership roles may be more likely to take advantage of *transformational teacher leadership* as well as allow the development of the talents of more teachers from more sources. Not doing so may actually exclude valuable sources of leadership. Further study of teachers as transformational leaders, as opposed to administrators, in rural and non rural settings is worth pursuing.

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