Chapter 10

Not Too Young to Lead:
Preparing Pre-Service Teachers to Lead

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews the case for leadership development opportunities for pre-service educators so that prospective teacher leaders are willing and able to take on leadership roles once in the classroom. The chapter discusses the various curricular approaches to developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective teacher leadership. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the various knowledge, skills, and dispositions that can begin to be developed during an undergraduate teacher preparation program. In addition, the chapter will examine focus areas for leadership development for teachers that may not be part of the traditional pre-service teacher preparation curriculum, including the concepts of followership, power, and influence techniques.

INTRODUCTION

Making The Case For Undergraduate Teacher Leadership Preparation

Who are the leaders in our schools? Typically we think first and foremost of those with positional power and authority over other individuals in the organization, the principal and the administrative team. The principal is responsible setting a direction for the organization, one of the most critical functions associated with leadership. Principals have to be visionaries who can wear an ever increasing number of hats at any given time. They are called upon to be instructional leaders, personnel managers, data analysts, innovative thinkers, public relations experts…and much more. As a result, principals are increasingly seeing the value of modifying the traditional leadership structure in schools by turning to their teachers. Kotter (1990) points out that effective corporations do not wait for leaders to emerge but instead act proactively to find those with the potential to lead and provide them with the professional experiences to do so. Similarly, schools need to begin to actively identify potential teacher leaders and begin to cultivate their leadership acumen.

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The idea of distributed leadership model in our schools was put forth by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond in 2001 and articulated that distributed leadership involves an “interactive web of actors” and is “stretched over leaders, followers, and activities within a reciprocal interdependency” (Lambert, 2003, p. 424). This is a far cry from the more hierarchical model of leadership that has tended to dominate the school landscape.

However, few experienced teachers have had any specific leadership training as part of their undergraduate programs (Judd Pucella, 2014). Existing curricular programs focused on educational leadership are at typically graduate level programs and are intended as a path toward entering the ranks of administration. While these educational leadership programs still dominate the graduate landscape, there have been an increasing number of graduate programs that are focused on the idea of teacher leadership, or leadership training for those who wish to lead but would like to remain in an instructional role.

 Calls for including leadership development in the pre-service curriculum for teacher preparation programs are gathering momentum. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) called for an introduction of the concept of teacher leadership and the infusion of leadership skill development into the pre-service experience in order to provide a leadership foundation upon which to build during their early careers. Hess, in describing why even novice teachers need to learn to be “cage-busters” noted that new teachers who have been exposed to the ideas around leadership may be able to see potential even in difficult situations and feel “a sense of possibility and an understanding that things needn’t be as they are” (Hess, 2015, p. xvii). Bond (2011) states that while we can agree that we have high expectations for performance in the classroom immediately, new teachers are not ready to lead because they lack an understanding of leadership or do not know the power that it can have to improve teaching and learning.

The common argument against beginning teachers as leaders is that they simply do not have the maturity and experience necessary to take the reins of leadership. However, as Lortie (2002) points out, beginning teachers are invested with tremendous responsibility from day one for all aspects of their classroom, and in many other ways are treated no differently than teachers with decades of experience. If this is true, leadership preparation in the pre-service and induction phases of a teacher’s career would seem to be not only appropriate, but necessary.

As Bond (2011, 281) notes, the pre-service experience is a crucial stage at which the educator is formulating their views and philosophy. This provides teacher educators with an opportunity to instill the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions in emerging teacher leaders. This chapter will:

- Identify the benefits of undergraduate teacher leadership preparation, including instilling the confidence to lead, improved teacher retention, and a way to address the looming leadership gap in our schools.
- Discuss curricular approaches to pre-service teacher leadership development.
- Identify the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teacher leaders that can be developed at the undergraduate level.

The Benefits of Pre-Service Leadership Education

There are a number of benefits to infusing leadership training into our incredibly crowded curriculum for teachers. Perhaps the most obvious benefit is that pre-service teacher leadership education provides a foundation for understanding leadership upon which teachers can build as they gain experience in the
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