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# Developing a National Perspective of Interrelated Preparation: Educational Administration Leading Teacher Leadership Programs

Caryn M. Wells  
*Oakland University*

Marc Shelton  
*George Fox University, mshelton@georgefox.edu*

Ralph L. Marshall  
*Stephen F Austin State University*

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# NCPEA POSITION PAPER

*Developing a National Perspective of Interrelated Preparation:  
Educational Administration Leading  
Teacher Leadership Programs*

*Authors:*

Caryn M. Wells, Oakland University  
Marc Shelton, George Fox University  
Ralph L. Marshall, Stephen F. Austin State University

## Executive Summary

This NCPEA Position Paper articulates a national perspective for the development of teacher leadership programs with leadership from educational administration professors. The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), as the professional organization that provides direction and leadership for its members, presents a vision for dialogue and action to collaboratively develop teacher leadership programs among professors of educational administration and teacher education faculty.

We believe that leadership matters and thus we submit there is a sense of urgency for professors to collaboratively develop teacher leadership programs embedded within educational administration programs. It is crucial that these programs articulate knowledge and skills aligned to the national standards for preparing school leaders—leaders who know excellent instruction, but who also are excellent leaders.

We envision programs of teacher leadership that include both content and leadership instruction, integrating concepts from curriculum from teacher education, and leadership from educational administration that cultivate skills. These leadership skills are applied in authentic educational environments where experiences are cultivated and guided by both university professors and school practitioners. Appropriate instructional methods for adults provide learning through problem-based concepts where teacher leader candidates can plan, experience, and evaluate on-the-job activities to develop voice, confidence, and actions as leaders and change agents, without ever assuming an official role or title of school administrators.

In this document we present three principles for consideration, which correlate with three audiences that could advance these principles.

## Background

The call for educational reform in the U.S. continues in the form of headlines that compare international test scores. Principals are leading in a time of unprecedented accountability, with demands for success for every student. Principals and teachers are being evaluated for student performance, with increased scrutiny to close the achievement gap within their schools, and charged with the responsibility to change under high stakes accountability measures (Cooley & Shen, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007). In addition to the mounting responsibilities for instructional leadership, principals are still responsible for managerial aspects of their work (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Cooley & Shen, 2003; Griffith, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Petzko, 2008). The workload of principals has been described as a “job too big for one” (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 518).

As a result, teacher leadership continues to be reviewed and presented for its potential contribution to teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2000; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; Smylie & Denny, 1990; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The work of Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) documents that leadership (principals and teacher leaders) is the second highest factor next to the quality of classroom

instruction (teachers) attributed to improved student learning; these findings support an earlier meta-analysis of research conducted by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003).

Interest in developing teacher leadership programs continues to grow. In 2008 a group of educators from across the United States met to review the research about the roles that teachers perform to improve student achievement; they developed the *Teacher Leader Model Standards* (TLEC, 2011) as a result of those meetings. Modeled after the format of the Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (CCSSO, 2008), The *Model Standards* contain seven domains. Its authors reported,

Kansas has adopted teacher leader standards and is in the forefront of developing the nation's first assessment of teacher leadership. Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, and Louisiana are now offering optional teacher leaders endorsements as part of their teacher certification systems, and states such as Arkansas, California, and Connecticut are establishing criteria for endorsing, certifying, or credentialing teacher leaders. (p. 25)

The current *Teacher Leader Model Standards* are strong in instructional leadership, but need to be strengthened in the practical areas of leadership and the political nature of leading organizational change. Interest in improved student achievement, teacher quality of instruction, increased accountability and responsibility for principals, and growing movement to define and create programs for effective teacher leaders are the impetus for this call to conversation and action.

## **Principle 1. Effective Teacher Leadership Preparation Requires Interrelated Leadership within Institutions of Higher Learning**

We propose that professors within administrative preparation programs work with teacher education faculty to direct and guide graduate students to consider a full-range of possibilities in teacher leadership programs. These paths could lead to enhanced teacher roles as literacy coaches, lead teachers, technology specialists, mentors or preparation to become a building principal. Instead of concentrating solely on content from within the current program tracks, this model provides for skills in myriad areas, including leadership, instructional practice, technology, and responding to the new knowledge economy where the currency of access to knowledge rules (Hargreaves, 2003).

We present a model of an innovative approach to leadership development—one that provides options for leadership preparation for teacher leaders and administrator leaders. Educational leadership preparation programs offer nimble and entrepreneurial approaches to develop an interrelated curriculum with teacher leadership strands. Whether these are degree or non-degree programs, multiple paths must exist to prepare future educational leaders.

The model we are suggesting is one that integrates practice and experience within mutual and reciprocal relationships—an *interrelatedness*—built on a theoretical foundation that allows for practical strategies and political awareness as teachers and principals interact to improve student achievement. Schools are complex and living systems, so modeling interrelated leadership combines process with practices that are essential to move schools toward improvement: 1)

analyzing data of standardized and teacher-generated assessments; 2) cultivating of vision for transformation through organizational inquiry and personal reflection; 3) creating a collaborative culture indicative of a learning organization; and 4) developing the political context where teachers learn skills to navigate the complex political terrain of school leadership.

We see this model as having infinite possibilities for both formal and informal leadership. Faculty from teacher education, educational administration, educational psychology, educational foundations, curriculum, instruction, and assessment could offer select courses to cross-train school leaders. But, an interrelated teacher leadership program requires instructional more than structural change. A result is an interrelated leadership approach to use adult education models in professional development courses.

Strategies for pedagogy (child-focused) and andragogy (adult-focused) cover a broader range of teaching than the term *instruction* to encompass what is learned and why it is learned. It is a holistic strategy leading to improved student achievement (MacNeill, Cavanagh, & Silcox, 2003). Andragogy focuses on the professional development needs of adult learners to connect learning to life experiences. These learning experiences can lead to an immediate application by teachers (Knowles, 1984). Hollins (2011) connects instruction to results using, “a clearly designed and integrated pattern of learning experiences,” “embedded” in theory and philosophy that provides a “clear vision” for learning (p. 400). English, Papa, Mullen, and Creighton (2012) advocate for pedagogically centered leadership, which moves beyond the definition of the master teacher concept. They propose collaboration within the field of education to create schools that are more democratic and just through teacher leadership. We advocate for programs in administrative leadership that center on strategies to lead improvements for student learning as opposed to a managerial model that places a priority on efficiency and organizational order.

## **Principle 2. Common Educational Leadership Standards Shape Focused Outcomes**

Faculty expertise serves to both meet the preparation needs of future school leaders and the professional development needs for educators in current leadership roles, while presenting a broader picture of leadership. There is a lack of readiness of pre-service teachers to understand, let alone care for, the big picture aspect of teaching and learning. To successfully enter the profession, their focus needs to be on learning classroom management strategies and content-specific methods (Harrison & Birky, 2012). Educational leadership programs are in a unique and specific position to present instruction that provides practical and relevant experiences aligned to educational administration’s national standards for knowledge, skills, and competencies. This focus on student learning helps educators thrive in varied leadership roles and ensures a safe educational environment within a context of moral and legal decision-making.

Teachers in today’s schools have accepted roles that reach beyond classroom instruction (Barth, 2001; Shelton, 1993). These expanded roles of leadership have led to instructional coaching and mentoring that extend beyond developing one’s skills and competencies for a professional benefit. These roles not only fit the seventh ELCC Standard as sustained, substantial internship experiences during a preparation program, they require larger perspectives on organizational leadership that cause teacher leaders to envision bigger ideas and plans for improving learning

for all students within a building or district. These expanding roles also require leaders in formal administrative roles to act in ways that “re-center” education’s focus on collaborative, shared, and mutually beneficial leadership—a leadership style that is more democratic, serving to promote the goals of an organization and its people instead of a bureaucratic and authoritarian style preserving positional authority (English et al., 2012; Kutcher, Bragger, Rodriguez-Srednicki, & Masco, 2010).

The Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium initiated its work to formulate standards for developing teacher leaders in 2008. Our rationale in reviewing these “national standards,” instead of presenting a state-by-state analysis, is based upon a similar vetting of the administrative preparation standards by national-level consortia.

As anticipated, teacher-leader standards align well with Instructional Leadership (Standard 2), Inclusive Practice (Standard 4), and somewhat with the Socio-Political aspect of policy influencing classroom practices and policies (Standard 6). Perhaps this is due to the focus of initial teacher preparation programs. The bigger-picture aspects of school and district leadership contained in *ISLLC 2008*, such as Visionary Leadership (Standard 1), Effective Management (Standard 3), and Ethical Leadership (Standard 5) are evident in the crosswalk, but tend to be limited to building-level perspectives on classroom instruction or considerations for an individual’s professional success.

The strength of the *2011 ELCC Program Standards: Building and District* (NPBEA, 2011) lies in requiring leaders to consider the distinction between experiences at the building level from those at the district level. This is important when considering, for example, strengthening the use of technology to make data-informed decisions. This is a specific focus on administrator preparation that could be strengthened in both of the ISLLC and ELCC standards documents (ISTE, 2009). It is important that authentic preparation includes the knowledge, skills, and ability of leaders to recognize additional complexity within a school and between levels of schooling.

### **Principle 3. Interrelated Leadership Programs Require Greater Collaborative Partnerships between Universities and Schools**

The NCPEA position paper on teacher leadership integrates the theoretical framework from pedagogic leadership with andragogic strategies to provide insights into how principals might contribute to the development of teachers as leaders. When teacher leadership is cultivated and supported by building principals (Birky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Wells, Maxfield, & Klocko, 2011), an important understanding about the cultivation of teachers as leaders may affect programs that provide training for principals.

The concept of teachers as leaders is not new; analysts have described the various formal and informal roles that teachers assume in schools. These roles include department chairs, and lead teachers, (Bond, 2011; Silva et al., 2000; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Snell & Swanson, 2000;). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) reported that the various teacher leadership roles may be divided into three leadership functions a) service to students and colleagues; b) contribution to the overall operational tasks of the school; and c) governance or decision-making roles.

Using educational settings for site internships augment simulated exercises in college classrooms, provide authentic preparation for school leadership, and promote reflection and inquiry led by practitioners and clinical faculty. Interrelated leadership, as discussed above through the merging of expertise from both educational administration and teacher education faculty, ensures an integrated emphasis on navigating the challenge of ensuring fiscal and human resources to provide quality instructional settings within an ethical and legal framework for all students. Understanding the broader context can help to develop university/school connections for teachers to access current research and trends. University faculty could benefit from access to schools to limit the silo-effect between higher education and PK-12 education.

## **Implications for Interrelated Teacher Leadership Programs**

### **Audience One: Higher Education—Professors of Educational Administration Programs**

After a review of standards for teacher leader and school administration programs—along with the consideration of practical applications for redesigning principal preparation programs—the authors conclude that educational leadership programs need to make changes in how they are structured. This paper includes recommendations to improve and implement successful teacher leader programs while at the same time improving preparation programs for aspiring principals based on a) the advocacy for interrelated leadership that is centered on improved student achievement; b) a review of related standards of both teacher leadership and principal leadership programs; and c) a concern for building relational trust and viable partnerships among key stakeholders within school districts and universities.

These perspectives have led to the following recommendations:

1. To assure that teachers seeking leadership roles in schools attain an interrelated view of leadership responsibilities at the school and district level, educational administration faculty should initiate discussions among all faculty within colleges of education to design a series of core leadership courses, presented in a collaborative and interrelated teacher leader preparation program, to prepare both principals and teacher leaders for future educational leadership roles that are collaborative and inclusive.
2. To assure that teachers aspiring to become certified/endorsed/licensed as principals attain a more extensive view of curriculum development, issues related to students with special needs, and sound instructional practices; professors of educational leadership need to work collaboratively with faculty members who specialize in these areas to develop courses delivered by faculty in such areas to be taken by all students seeking an advanced degree in educational leadership.
3. To build relational trust and collaboration among teacher leaders and those responsible for the administration and management of schools (i.e., school boards, superintendents, principals), universities should develop partnerships where teachers are able to interact with mentors from teaching and administrative positions. To accomplish and promote these partnerships, core educational leadership courses and the awarding of advanced degrees in the area of educational leadership should remain



under the authority and expertise of the faculty currently responsible for the preparation and certification/endorsement of principals.

### **Audience Two: State Departments of Education**

We recommend that state departments of education embrace the Interrelated Model of Teacher Leadership Program preparation as proposed in this paper. Effective preparation of teacher leaders requires mutual and reciprocal relationships among higher education, schools, and professional associations fully aligned to both teacher leader and educational administration standards. Program approval to develop teacher leadership programs solely within teacher education programs may provide additional preparation in instructional leadership, but will miss an important component of preparing for leading organizational change.

We contend that teacher leadership, by its name, implies that *leadership* is pivotal to its success. We are not suggesting a form of traditional programming that might focus exclusively on areas of instruction for teachers. Instead, we present a conceptual program that has, as its base, instructional and leadership theories that include the application of skills that professors of educational administration can offer.

For example, skill development in the areas of educational change leadership, building capacity for teachers to embrace school improvement efforts, working for transformational change in schools, dealing with conflict resolution, facilitation of effective, collaborative meetings, and other aspects of leadership can be best presented by professors of educational administration, who have training and experience as practitioners in leadership. These professors can offer problem-based learning activities where teacher leader candidates can plan, experience, and evaluate activities to develop voice, confidence, and actions as leaders and change agents, within the classroom or school as a learning laboratory.

It has been the experience of the authors of this paper, who serve as professors in teacher leadership and educational administration programs, that graduates move into service within their schools through informal and formal roles. Some teachers serve as school improvement specialists, literary coaches, department or grade level chairpersons, technology specialists, mentors, coaches, or other informal roles where teachers step up and offer assistance in chairing meetings, and working on a variety of projects in the schools.

It has also been our experience that approximately one-third of the teachers who complete the programs decide to advance their training in formal school administration programs and positions. Therefore, it is important that state departments of education recognize the value of educational administration programs in preparing teachers for myriad career advancements, whether the decision is to remain in the classroom or assume other positions in school leadership.

### **Audience Three: Practitioners in the Field**

Because of changes in shared leadership within schools, it is imperative that practicing school administrators understand the concepts of an interrelated leadership model that is advanced in this paper. Professors of educational administration are in unique positions to create



university/school partnerships in which principals can act as mentors in field-based internships for aspiring teacher leaders.

As we promote new roles and responsibilities for teachers as leaders, the university-school partnerships can cultivate and build capacity for authentic guidance of leadership skills. The interrelated concept of leadership provides for interactive exchange for professional development, with principals providing a continual flow of issues that are current and relevant, for which teacher leaders may collaborate, problem solve, and offer practical solutions. The urgency of problems facing schools suggests that a change in the culture of the schools to promote and include teachers as leaders can be strengthened when principals are linked with university professors for the two-way exchange of information; in this sense the application of teacher leadership programs finds a natural home in authentic educational settings and the practice of teachers as leaders informs the university instruction.

## Conclusions

Assuring the high quality of all programs that prepare principals has always been one of the goals of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration. This goal serves as the basis for NCPEA's interest in developing a dialog that will continue to place the responsibility of preparing future educational leaders with faculty members who are most qualified and experienced for the relevant tasks.

University preparation programs are faced with challenges and opportunities to prepare aspiring and practicing leaders to fulfill the expectation to transform educational environments where every student achieves and thrives. The leaders needed for these roles include teachers and principals. Calls for pedagogic leadership in the training of principals are emerging in the literature (English et al., 2012). MacNeill et al., (2003) defined pedagogic leadership as a distinct priority for student learning that is based on expertise and understanding of student learning. Pedagogical leadership is the priority for a principal. The skills necessary for teacher leadership find a natural home with the educational administration faculty in programs where pedagogic and andragogic leadership can be cultivated.

Interrelated leadership preparation seeks to integrate and incorporate the strength of multiple programs within a school of education to prepare school leaders. Interrelated leadership programs model a combination of distributed and pedagogic leadership practices centered on inter-relational processes and products versus a focus on individual roles. Characteristics of these programs include: 1) inquiry-based methods of instruction relevant to adult learners, 2) experiential-based activities to connect theory and practice for teachers, and 3) evidence-based decision-making using data from observations for both principals and teachers. The National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, as a professional organization, is ready to advance these principles.

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