

Advancing Leadership: A Model for Cultivating Democratic Professional Practice in Education

SAGE Open
April-June 2014: 1–13
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DOI: 10.1177/2158244014530729
sgo.sagepub.com


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Abstract

Preparing students to become active citizens and contributors to a democratic society is premised on teaching democratic principles and modeling standards of democratic practice at all levels of education. The purpose of this integrative literature review is to establish a conceptual framework grounded in literature and a model for cultivating democratic professional practice in education (DPPE) to advance leadership for school improvement. This work is presented in three parts: (a) a review of historical references, reports, and legislation that culminated in increased accountability and standards in P-12 public education; (b) a discussion of social patterns in education generally associated with bureaucracy versus democracy; and (c) a new contribution to the literature, a model for cultivating DPPE is conceptualized to encourage leading and teaching professionals to reflect on beliefs and evaluate practices in advancing leadership for school improvement. Recommendations are included for further research.

Keywords

educational administration, leadership and policy, education, social sciences, education theory and practice, schools, educational measurement and assessment, achievement

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to establish a conceptual framework grounded in literature and a pragmatic foundation for cultivating democratic professional practice in education (DPPE), including extending partnerships throughout P-20 education to advance leadership for school improvement. Dzur's (2004, 2008) concept of democratic professionalism involves professionals in journalism, law, health care, and private business as agents of democracy by sharing authority and including laypeople in collective decision making. Whereas the field of education is not a main focus of Dzur's work on democratic professionalism, Armstrong (2006) suggested developing democratic professional practice in pre-service teacher education and social work as a way to promote principles of democracy in educational and social settings.

This inquiry extends the conceptualization to educational leadership and includes research-based recommendations to foster democratic practices in schools represented in a model that may bring sustainable improvements in education. To provide sufficient background and knowledge for this emerging topic, an integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005) is utilized. The article is presented in three parts: (a) a brief review of historical references, reports, and legislation that culminated in increased accountability and standards in education; (b) a discussion of social patterns in education generally associated with bureaucracy versus democracy; and (c) a

new contribution to the literature, a model for cultivating DPPE is conceptualized to encourage leading and teaching professionals to reflect on beliefs and evaluate practices in advancing leadership for school improvement. The conceptual model developed includes five components:

1. Sharing purpose: higher purpose, culture of care, and participation in community;
2. Sharing data: professional learning communities (PLCs), teachers as researchers, and collaboration;
3. Sharing expertise: teacher professional communities (TPCs), research-based practices, and collegiality;
4. Sharing leadership: collaborative leadership, teachers as leaders, instructional leadership, and genuine empowerment;
5. Sharing responsibility: civic responsibility, leadership for social justice, and commitment;

Each of these components will be fully discussed and illustrated in visual form.

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Review of Historical References, Reports, and Legislation

Forty-five states across the United States, including the District of Columbia, have adopted the Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) for providing a high-quality education, including skills to help students be successful in college and careers. The call for education reform in America is not new, occurring as early as the 1800s when Horace Mann and Henry Barnard campaigned for the betterment of U.S. public education (Meyer, 1965). The Russian launch of Sputnik in October of 1957, the 1981 report, *The Need for Quality*, published by a special task force of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* contributed to current issues of reform and achieving excellence in U.S. public education (Manna, 2006). It is also worth noting that the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS; 1990) was developed to identify and describe skills inherent to a productive work environment. The SCANS commission encouraged collaboration between educators and industry leaders to determine skills needed by young people to be successful in the workplace.

The federally legislated No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB; United States Congress Public Law 107-110, 2002) emerged as one of the most influential forces behind school reform in the United States. Policy makers took serious steps at the national level to bring about reform in the public education system. In addition, the Department of Education's strategic plan demonstrated unquestioning support for NCLB. In the introduction of the 2002-2007 Strategic Plan, federal officials sent a clear message to educators across the nation, "Our vision at the Department is to change the culture of education, from a culture of compliance and susceptibility to instructional fads to a culture of achievement, professionalism and results" (United States Congress Public Law 107-110, 2002, p. 2).

In response to the NCLB (United States Congress Public Law 107-110, 2002), state and local education agencies experienced a sense of urgency like never before. Educators and legislators at the state level adopted standardized assessments that measured student achievement and determined adequate yearly progress (AYP) at designated grade levels. State departments of education implemented computer-based systems that allowed educators to electronically administer standardized assessments and access test results. The expectation of the NCLB was that 100% of U.S. students would be performing at proficient levels in reading and mathematics by the year 2014.

Educators across the nation recognized meeting the standards of the NCLB (United States Congress Public Law 107-110, 2002) would be a costly, cumbersome, and controversial endeavor. Improving education necessitates more than administering assessments and measuring growth. U.S. educators currently stand at the threshold of 2014 with a deeper understanding of excellence, of NCLB, and of yet two more

public education reform measures. In addition to the state led Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) to ensure student college and career readiness, President Barack Obama's administration has requested increased diligence in teaching Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education as part of the Race to the Top program (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

This brief review of historical events and federal mandates increasing accountability in education provides a basis for understanding the current sense of urgency felt by U.S. educators, including postsecondary personnel who work in teacher and school leadership preparation programs. Increased standards are causing teachers and school leaders to reevaluate professional practices and reorganize social patterns in an effort to raise the bar of excellence in U.S. schools.

Discussion of Social Patterns in Education

Social Patterns of Bureaucracy

The concept of bureaucracy is defined in this article as "social patterns that organize what people do together in schools. Bureaucratic patterns set some social boundaries on what we can and cannot do as teachers and administrators" (Earle & Kruse, 1999, p. 18). School leaders may be able to determine the extent of bureaucracy present in the structure of the organization by studying common social patterns including how educators interact in schools.

Political economist and social theorist, Max Weber, regarded bureaucracy in its purest form as an efficient system of management, "as the optimal means for coordinating large numbers of people to accomplish collective goals" (cited in Earle & Kruse, 1999, p. 21). Bureaucracies were a means to achieve success by incorporating five basic tendencies: (a) division of labor or specialization, (b) impersonality, (c) hierarchy of authority or centralization, (d) rules and regulations or formalization, and (e) career orientation (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Weber considered these tendencies to be steadfast because they were based on titles and positions rather than on people.

By the end of the 19th century, American business leaders, government leaders, and educational leaders had adopted and implemented bureaucratic models for managing in both private and public sectors. Earle and Kruse (1999) surmised, "The educational leaders were particularly dazzled by the possibilities offered by this new form of organizing people" (p. 22). More than a century later, patterns of bureaucracy persist in modern public schools in the United States, diminishing the potential of educators and their communities to collaborate for genuine empowerment and contribution (Henry, 1996).

Darling-Hammond (1994) expressed her view of how patterns of bureaucracy in U.S. schools have adversely affected the teaching profession:

As bureaucrats, teachers need not be particularly expert, since most major teaching decisions are handed down through policy and encapsulated in curriculum and teaching materials. It is better that they not be especially “empowered,” as correct implementation depends on a certain degree of uniformity controlled from above. (p. 5)

Darling-Hammond (1994) recommended empowering teachers as a viable force in the process of change, further freeing education from unremitting patterns of bureaucracy. Genuinely empowered teachers would be encouraged to share their expert knowledge and judgment as they work collegially with school leaders, policy makers, and community members to plan and implement school improvement.

Although bureaucracy served as a system for efficiently organizing large numbers of people to achieve the same goal, Weber did not adequately address potential deficiencies in the five characteristics of the ideal type of bureaucracy (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). It is doubtful those who consolidated bureaucracy as a model for education anticipated repercussions the institutional organizational structure would have on the current culture of U.S. public schools. Whereas individual public schools are celebrated by parents and embraced as social hubs within their communities, U.S. public education as a whole has been criticized for decades as entrenched in a malaise of mediocrity (Hess & Petrilli, 2009; Ravitch, 1995, 2000; R. Rogers, 2012).

How can the Department of Education’s (2002) vision of changing “from a culture of compliance and susceptibility to instructional fads to a culture of achievement, professionalism, and results” (p. 8) be realized? How can a precedent of working in isolation be transformed into a community of work committed to a culture of sharing? In support of “creating meaningful curriculum that engages both teacher and student” (p. 16), Chaucer (2012) proclaimed,

Educational reform should increase students’ experience with democracy. Educational renaissance and robust standards will create schools with governance structures that will invite—even require—democratic participation, schools in which students are encouraged to speak and write with informed conviction. (p. 17)

Educational leaders can begin to create these structures by replacing social patterns that endorse compliance and compartmentalization with patterns built on quintessentially American foundations of democracy and communities of care.

Social Patterns of Democracy

Progressive education, democratic community, and school reform have foundations in the seminal work of Dewey (1916, 1933, 1938). Much has been written since Dewey’s original work to preserve democracy in U.S. schools while bringing requisite school improvement (Apple & Beane,

1995; Blankenstein & Houston, 2011; Giroux, 1988; Goodlad, 1984; Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004; Jacobsen, Frankenberg, & Lenhoff, 2012; Woods & Gronn, 2009). School improvement is defined here as a collaborative process for enhancing the overall excellence of teaching and learning by making necessary and sustainable adjustments to educational methods, systems, and social patterns.

Preparing students to be active citizens and contributors to a democratic society is premised not only on a foundation of teaching democratic principles but also on educators modeling standards of democratic practice and community at all levels. Dewey (1916, 1933, 1938) and subsequent researchers have urged transforming education from a more authoritative, teacher-centered style of practice to a more collaborative, engaged, student-centered style of practice. Leading and teaching professionals at all levels of education, including postsecondary personnel, have capacity to cultivate a paradigm of democratic principles and practice in U.S. schools. This article provides an abridged review of how democratic professional practice can be modeled and supported at all levels for advancing leadership for school improvement.

Researchers expounded the importance of a community of care (Beck, 1994; Kroth & Keeler, 2009; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013; Noddings, 1995, 2008, 2010; Owen & Ovando, 2000; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012) and a community of work conducive to bringing requisite improvement. Elementary and secondary P-12 teachers can teach overarching principles of democracy and model democratic and nurturing pedagogies in their classrooms (Goodlad et al., 2004; Mantle-Bromley, 2004). Democratic teaching practices are critically important because the educator who is professional models how students are to relate to one another and how to take responsibility for one’s own learning in interactions of care with others. Student-centered teaching strategies designed to immerse students in collaborative activities may help them feel more engaged and confident in their learning. As a social entity, the classroom and school as a whole can demonstrate a culture of care and community while maintaining high expectations for learning (Beck, 1994; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013; Noddings, 1995, 2008, 2010).

Communicating standards and expectations in a way that enables students to understand them is an essential aspect of care (Rivera-McCutchen, 2012). Rivera-McCutchen’s study about caring in a small urban high school showed how a caring environment may be taken for granted as an environment of lowered standards or expectations. She added, “Unless teachers can adopt the critical belief that their students are capable of rigorous work, they are not caring for students at all” (p. 677). Ongoing reflective practices can help teachers and school leaders to effectively care for students and provide necessary supports while expecting them to achieve exceedingly higher levels of academic work. Challenging students and educators to learn complex concepts within

communities of teamwork and cooperation may prepare them to function more successfully in a democratic society and global workforce.

As part of their own democratic professional practice, school leaders can help teachers hone their leadership skills and build capacity as teacher leaders (Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009) to promote genuine empowerment and status as teaching professionals. Working alongside school leaders and colleagues representing a multitude of content areas may inspire teachers to foster democratic practices in their classrooms and to espouse nurturing pedagogies (Goodlad et al., 2004; Mantle-Bromley, 2004). As Noddings (1995) argued, an ethic of care, the foundation of a nurturing pedagogy, means sharing and caring for all aspects of life and community building, including (a) care of the environment, (b) care of one another, (c) care of learning, and (d) care of self.

District level administrators can lead the charge for fostering democratic professional practice in their districts and schools. For example, inducting and mentoring novice teachers using a more collaborative model (McCann, Jones, & Aronoff, 2012) may provide new and abundant opportunities for creating desired professional communities (Owen & Ovando, 2000) capable of effecting sustainable improvement. Traditional one-on-one mentoring can be replaced by a more collaborative model where “mentoring is a group effort, involving practitioners with a variety of experience and providing an influential model for how colleagues work together as a matter of course” (McCann et al., 2012, p. 77). The idea combining traditional practices of induction and mentoring with collaborative communities have potential to justifiably reshape social patterns in education.

Postsecondary faculty, especially those who work in formal programs of teacher preparation (Kosnik & Beck, 2009; Michelli & Keiser, 2005) and educational leader preparation (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Furman, 2012; Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Spanneut, Tobin, & Ayers, 2012), can play a vital role in cultivating DPPE. Faculty can help candidates build capacity and develop skills that will allow them to carry forward a foundation of democratic principles and practices, which they, in turn, may teach to others. In essence, educators at all levels of education hold the key for creating communities of individuals who are capable of not only modeling democratic practices but also furthering the cause for cultivating democratic professional practice to benefit future generations. The conceptual framework and model, cultivating DPPE, is presented next to illustrate how school leaders can take steps toward advancing leadership and transforming practices in their schools and communities.

Conceptual Framework for Cultivating DPPE

Sharing Purpose

School reform is a perennial norm for more than a century which has captured the attention of U.S. citizens and policy

makers and so, has the adequacy of preparation of those who are to work in improved schools. School improvement requires more than increasing rigor, reducing class size, or implementing a different schedule. Sustainable improvement begins with a community of shared principles and shared work toward achieving a higher purpose (DeLorenzo, 2012; Fullan, 2001, 2003; Senge, 1990).

Establishing community based on a foundation of care commands heightened awareness of civility (Forni, 2002) and deepened commitment to interpersonal communication. Where there is dialogue, there is potential. Senge (1990) defined dialogue as “the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine ‘thinking together’” (p. 10). Members of a community may not necessarily agree with what has been said, but everyone respectfully considers what has been said without making assumptions, jumping to conclusions, or attributing unethical motives to others. Teachers’ and school leaders’ combined efforts are needed to establish a culture of civility and care. Schools may also benefit from leaders’ capacity to understand what truly motivates teachers (Pink, 2009) and ability to create an organization that is capable of continuously learning from itself (Senge, 1990) in an upward spiral of transformation and growth.

Understanding the dynamics and culture within an organization (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Schein, 1992) are key elements for building and sustaining a caring environment and a community capable of bringing improvement. Effectively influencing a school culture for change requires leaders’ understanding and awareness of values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms that are present and shared in the culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999). “Values are not simply goals or outcomes; values are a deeper sense of what is important” (p. 26). Shared assumptions are another aspect of culture that should not be overlooked. Assumptions “are deeply embedded in the cultural tapestry, and they shape thoughts and actions in powerful ways” (p. 27). Despite deep-rooted traditions in education, school leaders can identify cultural dynamics and reshape social patterns receptive to the possibility of sharing new assumptions.

Teaching can be an isolating experience (Elmore, 2000; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010; McCann et al., 2012). Elmore described the phenomenon of teaching in isolation as a condition that allows teachers to invent their own practices and hold onto outdated beliefs about teaching and learning, inhibiting capacity for growth. When capacity for growth is compromised, a culture of compliance and susceptibility prevails. “Privacy of practice produces isolation; isolation is the enemy of improvement” (Elmore, 2000, p. 20). Elmore urged school leaders to create environments that are supportive of collaboration and professional sharing.

Restructured schools transformed into PLCs involve teachers and school leaders working side by side to improve student learning (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). Teachers who assume facilitative or leadership roles within PLCs need assistance from their school leaders to build capacity as

instructional coaches and leaders of teachers. Sharing collegiality and practices within professional communities is a powerful way to help teachers acquire skills and expertise they need for advancing teaching and learning (Tenuto, 2006; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010).

Differences between PLCs and TPCs were illustrated by Levine (2011) in a study exploring advantages and disadvantages associated with professional communities in education. Both communities may provide opportunities for teachers to advance teaching and learning and to emerge as teacher leaders within their schools. PLCs are forums where school leaders and teachers meet to share data and ideas with the purpose of improving student achievement. TPCs are intended for school leaders and teachers to share professional expertise with the purpose of improving teaching practices.

Within these communities, school leaders, teacher leaders, and teachers may uncover a myriad of ideas together, as they work and explore research-based approaches for advancing teaching and learning and school improvement. Patterns of isolation, gendered roles, and hierarchical authority traditionally associated with bureaucratic structures can be replaced by patterns of community, sharing, and support. Cultivating democratic professional practice at all levels of education, including postsecondary, may advance leadership to a new level, capable of achieving sustainable improvement in schools.

Sharing Data

Literature supports educators collaboratively collecting and using data to inform practice and generate a school culture of excellence and improvement (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008, 2010; Reeves, 2006, 2008, 2010; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). The amount of extant literature advocating use of data and research-based strategies to advance the efforts of school improvement has increased measurably in recent years (Bauer & Brazer, 2012; Dean, Hubbell, Pitler, & Stone, 2012; Slavit, Holmlund Nelson, & Deuel, 2013). Engaging in conversations about the use of student learning data (Slavit et al., 2013), sharing interpretations of the data (Bauer & Brazer, 2012), and creating opportunities for students to be involved in the feedback process (Dean et al., 2012) may promote a sustainable culture of improvement by encouraging social patterns of meaningful discourses and collaboration.

In a national reform effort, creators of the NCLB (United States Congress Public Law 107-110, 2002) increased accountability in an effort to advance the quality of teaching and learning by expanding the use of data to measure student achievement. Superintendents, building level administrators, teachers, and state department personnel spend increased amounts of time collecting and analyzing student achievement data. Monitoring student growth through AYP and identifying strengths and gaps in student achievement are expected features of contemporary school leadership.

Analyzing data may serve to validate strengths in teaching and learning, while revealing potential gaps in curriculum or weaknesses in instruction. Some teachers are apprehensive to share student achievement results that may be indicative of their teaching, or to risk having their practices scrutinized by others. This may contribute to why some teachers resist analyzing data as one of the processes toward improvement:

To overcome the fear of what the data will indicate and how the data will be used, staff must collaborate in the collection and analysis so that the resulting information is trusted to be an accurate signpost of current performance. (Zmuda et al., 2004, p. 88)

One of the first steps for effectively using data and research-based principles is to establish a school community based on trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004) and conducive to sharing results and holding meaningful conversations for improvement.

An additional concern is teaching to the whole child means more than analyzing student test scores for many educators. As Goodlad et al. (2004) observed,

Such scores do not predict or correspond to success in such things as personal relationships, good work, play, or sound mental or physical health. For the most part, they become meaningless as soon as a student leaves the classroom. (p. 58)

Reducing learning to achievement results on state assessments diminishes the time students can spend acquiring skills and understandings in civic responsibility and social enculturation for succeeding in a democratic society.

How to balance high expectations for student achievement together with civic and democratic enculturation underpins this conceptual framework and model for advancing leadership for school improvement. As democratic professional practitioners, we can work in synchrony to perform both functions at higher levels. The framework for cultivating DPPE and theory discussed in this article may encourage teachers and school leaders to reflect on current beliefs about sharing student achievement data and to reevaluate current practices of using research-based principles to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

A continuous process of reflection (Brookfield, 1995) and conducting action research (Mertler, 2012; Sagor, 2011; Slavit et al., 2013) are vital components for improving professional teaching practices. A four-stage action research process developed by Sagor (2011) for advancing teaching and learning includes the following: (a) clarifying vision and targets, (b) articulating theory, (c) implementing action and collecting data, and (d) reflecting on data and planning informed action.

Conducting research on one's own practice is not enough; sharing findings with colleagues can help narrow the gap between theory and practice (Mertler, 2012). Devoting time

to reflect on implications of the analyzed data (Slavit et al., 2013) may strengthen the foundation of teaching and learning. In an empirical study regarding the amount of time teachers spent working with data and looking at data from within a collaborative inquiry process, Slavit et al. (2013) found groups of teachers spent the majority of their time gathering and analyzing data. Less time was spent engaging in the more complex process of inquiry and considering implications of the analyses. However essential, analyzing data and reflecting on ways to improve practice take a considerable amount of time and commitment.

Although it makes sense to use a collaborative process to identify and question less-desirable patterns of teaching and learning, Brookfield (1995) warned colleagues may feel threatened by those who question time-honored traditions or suggest replacing them with more democratic processes. Brookfield claimed, "This threat might be feared because of its ideological nature. Or it might simply be that what we are proposing represents a shaking up of familiar routines" (p. 41). A community open to critical evaluation of practices and processes to determine their effectiveness is essential to improving education.

Teaching and leadership are complex roles, and time is precious. As difficult and time-consuming as it may seem for educators to participate in action research and reflection, these processes are vital to the success of school improvement. A school environment where everyone has an opportunity to reflect on one's own practice and to share information and ideas can result in transformed teaching and learning.

Sharing Expertise

Literature exploring structures and practices for sharing professional knowledge or expertise was reviewed. Opportunities for collaboration and collegial sharing of knowledge and skills (Eaker et al., 2002; Fullan, 2001, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012; Levine, 2011; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008, 2010; Senge, 1990) are essential to teachers' abilities to improve their professional practices.

Imagine for one moment, an organization where individuals work together to continually develop capacity to achieve desired results, "where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3); this is Senge's (1990) definition of a learning organization. Goals of achieving exceedingly higher levels of personal mastery and organizational growth are at the heart of the learning organization. A true learning organization provides necessary supports and nurtures individuals' dispositions to commit to a lifelong process of growth and learning.

Providing time for teachers to meet professionally as communities allows them to reflect on their practices, share expertise, and collaborate with colleagues inside and outside their schools. As Fullan (2001) pointed out, "Effective

leaders understand the value and role of knowledge creation, they make it a priority and set about establishing and reinforcing habits of knowledge exchange among organizational members" (p. 87). Teachers and school leaders sharing expert knowledge is a powerful way to develop and strengthen democratic professional practice while advancing teaching and learning.

Delivery of continuing education courses designed to accommodate teachers' specific needs may serve as a viable component of a TPC. Often articulated with a postsecondary institution and embedded in daily activities, educators can use these courses to explore virtual environments and refine their online abilities, gaining access to a medium many students prefer (English, Papa, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012). Embedded courses can provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to increase their knowledge of research-based practices while earning credits toward recertification of state credentials.

Concepts grounded in constructivist theory of teaching and learning (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Piaget, 1952, 1973) include student-centered approaches to curriculum development (Chaucer, 2012; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), inquiry-based and problem-based learning (Barell, 2003), arts-based education (Cote, 2011), differentiated learning (Tomlinson, 2001), and the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993, 1999). These examples are a few of the many student-centered teaching and learning strategies that can be used in conjunction with STEM education (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) and Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010) for creating inclusive and caring classroom environments.

Relevant and real-life learning activities have potential for improving learning because they require engagement as students use their prior knowledge, collaborate, analyze information, and form their own conclusions. Furthermore, differentiated models of instruction (Tomlinson, 2001) include strategies for cultivating a wider range of interests, which may extend participation and learning for larger circles of students. Adopting differentiated methods may benefit teaching and learning at all levels of education, including postsecondary. Collaboration among faculty at the postsecondary level (Herbers, Antelo, Ettling, & Buck, 2011; Ortlieb, Biddix, & Doepker, 2010) and applied strategies for engaging students (Cavanaugh, 2011) may encourage candidates in formal programs of teacher and school leader preparation to adopt similar patterns in their professional practices.

Using TPCs for the purpose of sharing expertise is emergent in the literature and in the culture of public education in the United States as teachers and school leaders work collaboratively to bring about improvement in their schools. This approach may encourage educators at all levels to adopt a school culture of applying research-based instructional practices in their classrooms and making data-based decisions to improve teaching and learning school-wide.

Sharing Leadership

Discussed in the literature are collaborative leadership styles (Beck, 1994; M. Crawford, 2012; Donaldson, 2006; Fullan, 2001, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2003, 2004; Harris & Jones, 2010; Senge, 1990; Spillane, 2009) and the influence of mutual support between school leaders and teachers on student achievement (Goodlad, 1984; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Reeves, 2006, 2010; ten Bruggencate, Luyten, Scheerens, & Slegers, 2012; Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011).

Studies relating to political and corporate leadership and principles of transactional leadership (Burns, 1978) served as a foundation for the theory of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985). Often categorized as “a type of shared or distributed leadership” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 338), educators in the early 1990s found transformational leadership well suited to the task of restructuring schools. Hallinger (2003) warned, however, practicing transformational leadership is not easy because it requires personal attributes that are not necessarily acquired through training.

Although Fullan (2003) endorsed creating school cultures based on trust and aimed at performance, he acknowledged “such a culture must be guided, cultivated, and confronted. Leaders have to know when to let go as well as when to rein in” (p. 65). To achieve desired results using a collaborative style of leadership, school leaders are continuously gauging and adjusting, while navigating a clear and focused course within institutional structures. School leaders need the support of their staff, including a constituency of teacher leaders.

A decade ago, Harris (2003, 2004) surmised whether a genuine form of distributed leadership could endure the hierarchical structures and top-down approaches in a public educational system because “distributed leadership requires those in formal leadership positions to relinquish power to others” (Harris, 2004, p. 20). In a more recent study conducted in Wales, Harris and Jones (2010) reported PLCs, a type of distributed leadership, as having potential to advance large-scale improvement efforts. Harris and Jones added,

The model of professional learning communities being established in Wales is characterized by teachers participating in decision-making, having a sense of purpose, engaging in collaborative work and accepting joint responsibility for the outcomes of their work. (p. 174)

Harris and Jones’s (2010) study corresponds with literature that recommends replacing authoritative or top-down styles of leadership with more collaborative leadership styles (M. Crawford, 2012; Fullan, 2001, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012; Gronn, 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hargreaves & Fink, 2008) to support system-wide efforts for advancing leadership for school improvement.

Teacher leadership. Integral to the model conceptualized in this article for advancing leadership in education, works that focus on teacher leadership (Barth, 2001; Crowther et al., 2009; Danielson, 2006; Donaldson, 2006; Hallinger, 2003; Harris, 2003; Krovetz & Arriaza, 2006; Margolis & Doring, 2012; Paredes Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010; Reeves, 2008) are relevant. Teacher leadership is considered in this article as a democratic professional practice, which may be helpful in advancing collaborative leadership for school improvement. Added attention is given to teacher leadership, considering teachers often remain in their positions within a school longer than administrators (Danielson, 2006).

Teacher leadership is neither a form of top-down leadership nor an activity initiated from the bottom-up. Teacher leaders are teachers who share management responsibility within the school to strategically improve the quality of educational practice (Barth, 2001): “Rather than remain passive recipients—even victims—of what their institutions deal to them, teachers who lead help to shape their own schools and, thereby, their own destinies as educators” (p. 444). Despite expectations to model successful professional practices, teacher leaders may be influenced by social patterns in schools relating to gendered roles (Paredes Scribner & Bradley-Levine, 2010).

Also identified in Paredes Scribner and Bradley-Levine’s study (2010) was teacher leaders’ perceived lack of support from the district level and a lack of “cultural capital” (p. 515) to accomplish their leadership goals. Teacher leaders in the study considered the district’s bureaucratic procedures as obstacles to their goals. However, it was noted by the authors the meaning of teacher leadership in their study was more closely aligned to the institutional organization model involving a bureaucratic culture than to a more fluid model used to bring school reform. In either case, teachers who seek to become teacher leaders need support and assistance from experienced leaders (Margolis & Doring, 2012) to help build capacity for leadership and to navigate organizational structures and social patterns related to the position. Although literature relating to the practicality and effectiveness of creating communities of distributed leadership or teachers as leaders has been divided over the past decade, most researchers agree that collaborative leadership is essential to creating and sustaining a culture of improvement.

On analyzing results in a longitudinal data set where teachers and school leaders worked together to build academic capacity in schools, Hallinger and Heck (2010) reported “positively impacted growth in student learning” (p. 670). These findings support the notion of school leaders promoting collaboration and fostering school environments conducive to bringing individual professional growth and school-wide improvement. Although collaboration is desirable in education, the skills and personal attributes required to support a democratic style of leadership are not easy to cultivate. Forms of shared leadership are criticized because they require a different type of communication and

commitment from those involved. Teachers and school leaders can support each other by working together in a deliberate process of shared leadership and shared responsibility.

Instructional leadership. Demonstrated ability in instructional leadership (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Glatthorn & Jailall, 2009; Hallinger, 2011; McCann, Jones, & Aronoff, 2012; Reeves, 2006; Ylimaki, 2012) is a prerequisite for today's school leaders, who are essentially gatekeepers for innovative learning activities and new ideas being introduced in their schools. Patterns of organizational structure such as rigid time schedules and compartmentalized classrooms can pose challenges for achieving a desired level of democratic practices such as student-centered learning, an ethic of care, and a sense of community for all.

Combining their skills and proficient knowledge of curriculum and instruction, teachers, instructional coaches, and school leaders can work together to advance academic programs in schools (Neumerski, 2012). Improving teaching and learning at the P-12 level requires first-rate and meaningful programs of induction (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Kosnik & Beck, 2009), continued professional growth for teachers (Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2010; Heineke, 2013; Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010) and school leaders (Furman, 2012; Spanneut et al., 2012), continuous attention to the development and management of curriculum (Voltz, Sims, & Nelson, 2010; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) including creating systems of assessment and alignment of curriculum to current standards (J. Crawford, 2012), and support of student-centered activities and democratic processes school-wide (DeLorenzo, 2012). Continuous improvement of development and management of curriculum are essential at all levels of education, including postsecondary.

School leaders can help teachers to grow professionally into positions of leadership, so they may continue their own journeys for advancing school improvement through professional relationships of collaboration and sharing. Sharing leadership involves sharing expertise, sharing knowledge to inform decisions, and sharing responsibility for decisions that are made. As instructional leaders, school leaders can build capacity for sharing leadership by cultivating professional growth for teachers, fostering communities of student and teacher engagement, and modeling culturally professional practices that promote inclusiveness and care.

Sharing Responsibility

When individuals' beliefs or commitment to change are in sync with their willingness to take responsibility, a higher level of personal and professional integrity may be realized. The conceptual framework discussed in this article builds on Dewey's (1933) definition of responsibility:

To be intellectually responsible is to consider the consequences of a projected step; it means to be willing to adopt these

consequences when they follow reasonably from any position already taken. (p. 32)

Sharing responsibility means sharing a commitment to education, to the purpose and principles that guide the community, and to the work itself. Schools benefit when school leaders assume responsibilities encompassing curriculum and instructional leadership (English et al., 2012; Glatthorn & Jailall, 2009) and when teacher leaders assume responsibilities supporting improvement in student achievement (Eaker et al., 2002) and large-scale reform (Harris & Jones, 2010).

Sharing responsibility in a community of care also means sharing a commitment to civic responsibility and social justice education both inside and outside school walls. Extant literature informs the model in promoting civic responsibility (Palmer, 1998; J. Rogers, Mediratta, & Shah, 2012; Shiller, 2013; Wheeler-Bell, 2012), understanding diversity in education (Canfield-Davis, Tenuto, Jain, & McMurtry, 2011); Hondo, Gardiner, & Sapien, 2009; Nieto, 2004), leading multicultural education (Blankenstein & Houston, 2011; Bordas, 2007; Furman, 2012; Rodriguez & Rolle, 2007), and practicing social justice education in the classroom (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009; Grant, 2012; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013; Voltz et al., 2010).

Helping students gain dispositions they will need to live and work successfully in society is more important to some educators than student test scores (Goodlad et al., 2004). For some educators, cultivating civic knowledge and responsibility (J. Rogers et al., 2012; Shiller, 2013; Wheeler-Bell, 2012), in other words, students learning to be moral individuals who engage in civic communities and caring relationships with others is the reason for being educators.

"Schools are not democratic places," argued Grant (2012, p. 924). Nonetheless, allowing students to have a voice in their schools and participate in civic partnerships within their communities may encourage them to exercise skills associated with democracy. This is important because democracy requires students to practice harnessing their social power (Wheeler-Bell, 2012). Students should know that practicing democracy involves more than having a voice, a vote, a right to assemble peacefully:

To practice democracy also means that you learn about how the practice of democracy can be made to work for you or against you and that it is important that you understand the differences as well as know what you can do to influence an outcome that befits those who are marginalized. (Grant, 2012, p. 925)

Students' capacity to be reflective and deliberate in their actions toward others and in the way they manage events in their lives is integral to civic education.

A community envisioned on a civic model was defined by Palmer (1998) as "one of public mutuality rather than personal vulnerability" (p. 92). Palmer also warned of a potential drawback for determining truth in a civic model that uses

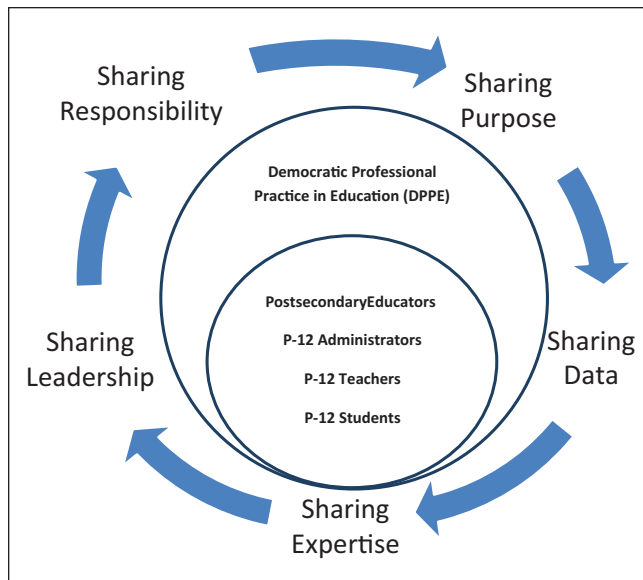


Figure 1. Model for cultivating DPPE.

Note. DPPE = democratic professional practice in education.

democratic means for establishing common good. Palmer added, “But what is noble in a quest for the common good may be ignoble in a quest for truth: truth is not determined by democratic means” (p. 92). Commitment to civic responsibility and social justice education can be a means for teachers, school leaders, and university personnel involved in teacher and school leader preparation to engage in a common purpose more noble than test scores.

Commitment to social justice education necessitates a capacity to deeply understand and care about issues relating to socioeconomic status, race or ethnicity, national origin, gender, religious background, individuals with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, and questioning (LGBTIQ) individuals. Socially just educators share a commitment to fostering appropriate, equitable, and inclusive learning environments in schools and districts. Educators can work together to incorporate inclusive practices, such as Response to Intervention (RtI) for providing necessary academic support (Buffum et al., 2009; Dulaney, 2013), providing civic and socially just opportunities where all students can flourish (Grant, 2012) and improving equity and adequacy through school finance (Rodriguez & Rolle, 2007).

Figure 1 depicts the model demonstrating how DPPE can be initiated and sustained through system-wide integration in schools and universities. Leaders, including superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, and university faculty all have a role in supporting dialogue, processes, and outcomes focused on fostering the highest potential for all.

To exemplify the significance of the model for advancing leadership, sharing purpose, sharing data, sharing expertise, sharing leadership, and sharing responsibility are components representing a larger system in which a philosophy of

care, inclusion, active participation, and commitment to growth prevail. Although the functions of these components are discrete, they can work symbiotically to bring connectedness and empowerment to everyone involved. Cultivating a refined level of DPPE is dependent on university faculty helping teachers and school leaders, school leaders and teachers helping each other, and teachers helping teachers to hone the skills necessary to effectively perform functions within each component of the model. Opportunities for teachers and leaders alike to embrace leadership responsibilities and duties associated with each component may renew levels of personal mastery and organizational growth, resulting in overall improvement of the educational system. This exemplar of sharing and supporting one another also provides a model for students as they prepare to live and work in a global society.

Conclusion

This integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005) began with a look at some of the policy and standards that have contributed to the current state of urgency, causing educators to improve schools in an effort to meet higher expectations. The NCLB (United States Congress Public Law 107-110, 2002) caught the attention of our nation’s policy makers and educators. Increased standards for teaching and learning created a wave of reform at both state and local levels, and accountability in public education is at an all-time high. Using democratic practices and theories relating to collaborative practices, educators can advance leadership to improve schools by cultivating democratic professional practice at all levels of education, including postsecondary.

Superintendents and building level administrators are spending increased time collecting and analyzing student achievement data. School leaders, teachers, and teacher leaders are working collaboratively in PLCs to gather, analyze, and scrutinize student results data to inform their practices. Professional teacher communities (PTCs) created for the purpose of sharing expert knowledge about teaching and learning may promote professional growth and teacher leadership requisite to school improvement. Although advantages and disadvantages of teacher leadership are present in the literature, professional communities as forums for sharing teaching expertise and fostering teacher leadership may contribute positively to school improvement.

The literature indicates teachers and school leaders can work together to increase student achievement. Educators can maximize their combined knowledge and expertise as they participate in a continuous process for developing and managing curriculum. Published works relating to building community, sharing student results data, sharing research-based practices, and PLCs versus TPCs were reviewed.

The purpose of using an integrative literature review was to examine theories related to DPPE and to connect these theories to practice. This framework and model suggest

possibilities for using sustainable methods for advancing leadership in education. A model for cultivating DPPE is conceptualized for further research and consideration. Replication of the model across different school systems is also recommended. Opportunities for reflection of practice, genuine empowerment, and meaningful collaboration may encourage teachers to emerge as teacher leaders and school leaders to evolve as instructional leaders within their schools. Replacing patterns of authoritative, top-down leadership with patterns of shared leadership and responsibility may prove instrumental in supporting STEM education as part of the Race to the Top program (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), Common Core State Standards Initiative (2010), and other initiatives for increasing excellence in U.S. schools.

Sharing leadership and commitment to civic responsibility and social justice education may be a means for teachers, school leaders, and university personnel to engage in a common purpose. Cultivating democratic professional practice at all levels of education holds promise for not only advancing leadership and improving schools, it may extend student learning beyond the scope of what is known as traditional public education by preparing individuals to become active citizens and contributors to a democratic society. The conceptual framework and model presented depict a caring school culture and community of work committed to sharing purpose, data, expertise, leadership, and responsibility. This culture of caring and commitment to sharing may influence students to one day apply their own democratic professional practice in life and in work, which may yield an increasingly just and caring society. Advancing leadership by cultivating democratic professional practice at all levels of education offers a way forward for educators to research, discuss, and revitalize capacity system-wide.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

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