

Positive Teacher Leadership: Building Mindsets and Capacities to Grow Wellbeing

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Linking theory and research on positive psychology and positive organisational scholarship, with a focus on positive leadership, this article provides a conceptualisation of teacher leadership as an intentional reflective process of learning to grow wellbeing for self and others. Aligned with increasing international research on the importance of wellbeing in schools, the author suggests teacher leadership may have a role to play in cultivating school cultures that foster wellbeing for all. In this way, teacher leadership is assumed to be a mindset, a way of seeing the work of leadership as an opportunity to build collective capacity for growing wellbeing as central to school improvement work. Further research is needed to determine the benefits and potentials of developing and supporting positive teacher leadership in schools.

Teachers have a strong role to play in school improvement efforts. Appropriately, these efforts tend to be focused on improving instruction for student learning and achievement (Muijs & Harris, 2005), with teacher leaders positioned as central to this instructional leadership given their understanding of the complexities of teaching and learning, and the dynamics of classrooms (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008). A recent addition to the school improvement agenda that can be implicated in what it means to understand teacher leadership is the notion of wellbeing. While much of the increased awareness about the importance of wellbeing in schools is focused on improving student wellbeing (Binfet, 2015; Broadbent, 2014; Waters, 2017), there are mounting calls for attending to teacher wellbeing as a priority in and for its own right (Cherkowski & Walker, 2016, 2018; Greenberg, Brown & Abenavoli, 2016).

Why the link between teacher leadership and wellbeing? Research on teacher leadership shows that teacher leaders can feel overwhelmed with the extra work of their leadership role (Baecher, 2012; Brooks, Scribner & Eferakorho, 2010) and with some of the challenging conversations and interactions that may ensue with their colleagues (as instructional coach, head of department or program, or as a decision-maker in some way in the formal leadership structures) (Margolis, 2012; Neumerski, 2012; Podjasek, 2009). Teacher leaders have also reported positive benefits such as gaining a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment through seeing an improvement in their own practice (Harris & Townsend, 2007), feeling a sense of professional growth (Hofstein, Carmeli & Shore, 2004), gaining new competencies and taking on more formal leadership roles within the school and the district (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012), and developing personal agency for contributing to school improvement (Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017).

Beyond reducing stress or growing satisfaction for individual teacher leaders, teacher leadership may also be helpful for cultivating school cultures that foster wellbeing for all. Increasingly, teacher leadership is understood as the roles and responsibilities teachers take on with students in their classrooms and with colleagues outside of their classroom (Margolis, 2012; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) toward school improvement efforts. Given their influence as agents of change for, and with, students and colleagues, I suggest that teacher leaders may be uniquely positioned to notice and nurture wellbeing (their own and others'), and that this may offer new potentials and benefits for growing school cultures of wellbeing for all. This argument is grounded in my research on flourishing in schools, using a positive organisational perspective to explore what it means to teachers to flourish (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018). Through this positive research lens, my colleague and I brought to description, through case study research designed to access participants' own stories about flourishing, what it means to them to feel well, alive, engaged, connected, and whole in their work. Teachers shared that they flourish: when their students do; when they feel a sense of belonging to a team of colleagues working toward a common purpose; when they feel a sense of joy, play, laughter, and fun at work; when they are encouraged and supported to take risks in their teaching; and when they see they are making a difference in the lives of their students, school, and community (Cherkowski & Walker, 2016, 2018).

Linking the increasing importance of wellbeing for school improvement, with findings from positive psychology and positive organisational studies that served as the theoretical framework for the research on flourishing in schools, I argue in this article for conceptualising the work of teacher leadership as a mindset, a sense of agency, or stance, toward growing wellbeing for all (for self, colleagues, students, staff, parents and all others in the school community). Building on research on positive leadership in organisations in general (Cameron, 2012; Quinn, 2015), and schools in particular (Murphy & Seashore Louis, 2018), a positive conceptualisation of teacher leadership may offer benefits and potentials for contributing to positive change among individuals, teams, and the school as a whole. Aligned with York-Barr and Duke's (2004) and Wenner and Campbell's (2017) assertion that teacher leadership research, in general, tends to lack a theoretical positioning, I bring theory from positive organisational scholarship and positive psychology to frame my argument for conceptualising positive teacher leadership.

For the purposes of this article, I rely on descriptions of teacher leadership as informally determined, as part of how teachers see their work as professionals, and as embedded in a sense of agency for working with their colleagues to influence change at the institutional level (Durrant, Frost, Head & Holden, 2000; Muijs & Harris, 2006). I also acknowledge that teacher leadership can be understood as formally designated roles and responsibilities, where teacher leaders are assumed to be those "who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom" (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 140). In the next sections I offer a brief overview of the positive organisational perspective influencing my conceptualisation of positive teacher leadership, and then offer a series of questions that may serve as a possible structure, or process, for shifting the lens toward a more positive, appreciative mindset for teacher leaders.

Why Flourishing? Why Now?

Recent descriptions and reports of teaching show that many teachers are suffering from exhaustion, uncertainty, anxiety, isolation, and stress (Fernet, Guay, Seneccal & Austin, 2012; Bermejo-Toro, Prieto-Ursua & Hernandez, 2016; Greenberg et al., 2016). Teaching is considered to be one of the most stressful occupations, contributing to teachers' real experiences of lack of engagement, poor performance, job dissatisfaction, high rates of turnover, and job burnout. In a recent report on stress and burnout in the workplace, Greenberg et al. (2016) indicated four main sources of teachers' stress: the school's environment (e.g., administration, climate, culture); overwhelming job demands; autonomy in decision-making; and teachers' personal resources and social-emotional competency for managing stress. Employees in education, as well as in health and social service, sectors are at significant risk of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout (Naylor, 2008). It is also known that a significant number of teachers, particularly those just starting their teaching career, leave the profession due to discouraging work environments (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2017).

Knowing the great strains, stresses, and suffering that we often hear about teaching and schooling, my colleague and I wondered what we might learn about school improvement if we placed our focus and attention on what works well in a system (Cherkowski & Walker, 2014). Influenced by research in positive organisations and psychology, we aimed to study schools from a strengths-based perspective. We focused our research attention on human capacities that seem to contribute to growing wellbeing at work, such as positive emotions and relationships, meaning, and purpose (Achor, 2011; Cameron & Caza, 2004). From the research in positive organisational scholarship, we knew that paying attention to happiness, resilience, optimism, and compassion leads to organisational benefits of increased commitment, innovation, and organisational health (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Lencioni, 2012; Lilius et al., 2008). Similarly, research in positive psychology showed that attending to strengths and positive outlooks, and growing positive habits and mental models, are beneficial for improving wellbeing (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Keyes, Fredrickson & Park, 2012; Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) by increasing resilience, vitality, and happiness while decreasing stress, anxiety, and depression (Lyubomirsky, 2007; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005; Peterson, 2006). We ascertained that these findings could lead us to re-imagine the work of teaching as flourishing, where noticing and nurturing wellbeing for all was central to what it means to carry out the work of teaching (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018). Additionally, we also assumed that a positive organisational perspective would be helpful for re-imagining the work of school improvement toward focusing on what works well and brings vitality to people in school organisations (Hoy & Tarter, 2011).

Positive organisational scholarship (POS) focuses on the positive traits, attributes, behaviours, processes, and practices of individuals and organisations (Carr, 2004; Gallos, 2008; Lilius et al., 2008; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Wright, 2003). Spreitzer and Cameron (2012) explained that positive organisations focus on "doing well" and "doing good," meaning that these organisations are not only high performing and profitable, but also encourage the wellbeing of their employees and community. The practices that contribute to this environment bring out the best of their employees, leading to work that is meaningful, generative, adaptable, and innovative (Spreitzer & Cameron, 2012). In fact, many researchers suggest that these concepts are instituted within the everyday practices of the organisation (Lilius et al., 2008; Kanov et al., 2004; Fritz, Lam & Spreitzer, 2011; Spreitzer & Cameron, 2012). Moreover, Fritz et al. (2011)

highlighted the notion of human energy, an affective state that includes eagerness, positive arousal, capability to act, vitality, enthusiasm, and the recognition of energetic resources. Strategies such as learning, creating joy, goal setting, spreading happiness to colleagues, extending gratitude, seeking feedback, and reflecting on the contributions one makes at work and the meaning of those contributions nurtures this notion of human energy (Fritz et al., 2011).

This positive organisational perspective has been found to have a heliotropic effect (Cameron, 2008), where focusing on virtuousness, and on what works well, tends to result in greater levels of individual and collective wellbeing (Williams, Kern, & Waters, 2016). Williams et al. (2016) found that as employees develop positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, they become more open to recognizing the virtuousness in others and in the learning organisations as a whole, as well as influence colleagues to behave in similar ways. In other words, educators who experience positive attitudes at work tend to have positive attitudes towards their work (Williams, Kern, & Waters, 2017). In terms of school organisations, there has been an increasing attention on the benefits of positive education for students (Seligman, 2011). Waters and Stokes (2015) argued for a broader reach, stating, “positive psychology needs to be woven into the DNA of the wider school culture so that its effects reach beyond students to also include teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, and school leaders” (p. 3).

With this positive organisational theoretical framework, we carried out qualitative case studies in elementary, middle, and secondary schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia where we engaged with teachers to intentionally notice what works well, and what makes them feel alive, engaged, connected, whole in their work. We knew from positive psychology that flourishing is a complex and multi-faceted concept that combines aspects of feeling good with aspects of meaning, purpose, connection, and engagement (Seligman, 2011; Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2006), and that flourishing can be experienced as a continuum of wellbeing. We invited our participants to share their stories of what matters most to them in their work and what makes them feel a sense of thriving, with the aim of developing a school-based definition of flourishing. We saw our research on flourishing in schools as an opportunity to contribute a new viewing lens for the work of teaching, one that emphasizes the importance of placing wellbeing at the centre of the work of educators for the purpose of improved collaboration, innovation, teaching, leadership, and learning.

We found that in flourishing schools relationships are central and at the core of all the work and all the learning that happens. Educators and staff feel a sense of common engagement in a higher purpose that unites them with a sense of passion, and in a spirit of playfulness to provide the very best learning environment and experiences they can for their students. In flourishing schools educators make the time and the space to collaborate in meaningful ways; they work hard to maintain caring relationships that encourage each other and model for their students an ongoing attention to compassionately supporting risk-taking, failing and then persevering in their ongoing efforts to continuously improve their teaching and learning. In flourishing schools, educators laugh a lot. They feel a sense of care and love for their colleagues, and a feeling of pride in their group. Principals who facilitate, fight for, and join in the daily life of these environments are prized by their staff, and they feel a sense of flourishing in their own work (Cherkowski & Walker, 2016, 2018).

Positive Teacher Leadership: Building Collective Capacity for Wellbeing

While there are a growing number of researchers writing about the benefits and potentials of positive leadership in organisations (Cameron, 2012; Dutton & Spreitzer, 2016; Quinn, 2015), very little has been written on positive leadership in schools (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018; Murphy & Seashore Louis, 2018). While there is no singular definition, positive leadership can be described as strength-based, focused on building and supporting positive relationships, facilitated through positive communication, and valuing of virtuous human capacities such as caring, kindness, forgiveness, gratitude, among many others (Cameron, 2012; Murphy & Seashore Louis, 2018). Positive leadership can be described as a moral endeavour, requiring caring, compassion, love, and service for others as part of the work of building environments for all to work well together toward shared goals, and often with the higher purpose of contributing to bettering humanity in some way (within the organisation for its members, and through the organisation's influences within communities and societies) (Cameron, 2012; Murphy & Seashore Louis, 2018; Quinn, 2015).

What might it mean to conceptualise teacher leadership from a positive perspective? Many of the qualities described above are transferable to teacher leadership, such as the relational practice of teacher leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2006), and the need for teacher leaders to communicate and connect with their colleagues in ways that moves forward the work of improving teaching and learning (Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017). However, given that there is no research on teacher leadership from a positive organisational perspective, there are no studies that focus on the benefits of paying attention to this work from a strengths-based, appreciative, positive perspective. There is also little attention in the teacher leadership literature on the moral nature of teacher leadership. Perhaps this is the case because there is a presumption of caring, love or service attributed to teachers already through the assumption that these qualities are evident in their teaching, as has been determined about caring principal leadership (Smylie, Murphy & Seashore Louis, 2016). In this article, I aim to sidestep the ongoing challenge of defining teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Wenner and Campbell, 2017), and offer insights and ideas about conceptualising positive teacher leadership grounded in the positive research literature, prioritising an inquiry-oriented approach that assumes teacher leaders as researchers of their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Stern, 2015), with a focus on building collective capacity for growing wellbeing. This conceptualisation aligns with research on teacher leadership indicating the important role teachers play in working with their colleagues to improve teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Muijs & Harris, 2005; Neumerski, 2012), and that this collaborative work contributes to teachers' sense of confidence as agents of change at many levels of the school (Cherkowski & Schnellert, 2017). Positive teacher leadership means working with colleagues toward school improvement in ways that grow wellbeing for all, guided by the assumption that wellbeing is fundamental to healthy and productive learning environments (Hymel & Schonert-Reichl, 2007), and that teachers' wellbeing is central to establishing and sustaining learning environments within which all students may learn and grow their capacities and skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Through this conceptual article, I hope to draw attention to the benefits and potentials for moving forward research and practice on teacher leadership through positive organisational perspectives, practices, and approaches.

Teacher Leadership as a Mindset: Reflecting on Agency for Positive Change

Mindsets are core sets of beliefs that become the lenses through which we see, interpret, and respond to and with the worlds within which we work and live (Dweck, 2006; Gergen, 2015; McGonigal, 2015). If mindsets are the way we see, take in, and then respond to and with our world, then flourishing mindsets could be understood as an openness of mind, heart, and spirit to the joys, mysteries, and unlimited abundance of the work world of teaching; a capacity to notice, seek out, and magnify opportunities for wellbeing, positive relationships, purpose and a sense of meaning, play, and enjoyment (Cherkowski, Hanson & Walker, 2018). The more we see the world as an opportunity to flourish, the more we seem to find opportunities for this to happen. We construct our social reality in ways that reflect and reinforce our mindsets (Gergen, 2015), and the awareness of this potential can be a powerful force for growing our sense of wellbeing (McGonigal, 2015).

From a flourishing perspective, and knowing that schools tend to improve when leadership responsibilities are distributed throughout the school (Firestone & Martinez & 2007; Harris & Muijs, 2006; Spillane, Diamond & Jutta, 2003), positive teacher leadership means working with others to build cultures of collective leadership for wellbeing, whether through formally designated leadership positions or informally determined as a deliberate intention to work with others toward positive change.

As an example of positive teacher leadership, one of the teachers in our research project on flourishing in schools developed a collaborative teaching team to re-design teaching and learning for all the grade eight students in their secondary school. This was not a formal leadership position, however this teacher, Gordon, intentionally sought out and worked with other colleagues to develop this program. He worked with the school administration to secure necessary resources and supports for this initiative. The colleagues he brought together had not had previous experiences of extensive collaboration, and so much of his work was to build an environment of trust and care, where they would feel safe enough with each other to talk about their teaching, to teach together, and to try out new practices, and strategies. He did this by focusing on positive relationships, positive communication, creating a sense of fun and play in their work, and co-creating with them norms of communication that allowed for healthy feedback so they could all improve. He explained the benefits of seeing the group from a strengths-based perspective saying, "...we all have our skills set that we are really good at, and when we recognize the certain skill set that we are really good at, then we can put those into play at the right time and moments; that's the kind of synergy that happens" (Gordon, focus group conversation, 2015). The principal of this school described the effect she was noticing on this group of teachers saying, "each member of the team has self-confidence and are assured in what their skills and strengths are.... I think there has been a melding of skills and strengths off of each other... they are willing to learn from each other and support each other and build their own skills and strengths while doing that" (Janet, focus group conversation, 2015). One of the teachers in this group explained how she was experiencing this collaboration experience,

[this collaboration] was a really positive experience. It is important to be heard, but it also is important to be challenged, because that encourages you to think differently and try different things which is one of the really big pros of collaboration... I think everybody left [our time together] with some new thoughts and new ideas and not feeling pressured in any way, just feeling really good about it. (Tracy, focus group conversation, 2015)

Gordon's leadership influenced and shaped how the team provided innovative and responsive teaching and learning for a large group of students. He was an instructional leader for and with these teachers. Talking with them about what they love, what makes them feel alive and whole, opened the space for them to talk about the importance of Gordon's attention to creating a positive learning environment for them, where they felt a sense of caring, belonging, respect, fun, and challenge. Another teacher in the group shared her experience of this team experience,

We have a strong respect for each other, and we are in the classroom together to genuinely support each other.... You are only able to recognize the needs of others if your own needs are being met.... We work to meet each other's needs, and this allows us to be more connected with students' needs. (Sara, email communication, 2015)

Gordon was intentional in how he designed the collaboration for this group of teachers to build relationships with each other, to share stories about their life and their work, to enjoy each other's company in class and during preparation times, and to build a shared purpose that helped them to see that they were making a difference in the lives of their students and each other. His leadership seemed to build capacity for wellbeing among the group that was then shared with the students.

This one example of positive teacher leadership may seem similar to other stories of good collaboration, or instructional leadership, however noticing and then nurturing how each other flourishes at work, and then encouraging them to do the same with others is not necessarily an obvious approach to teacher leadership. Indeed, research shows that negative stimuli and experiences tend to dominate positive ones (Cameron, 2008); we pay attention to problems, stressors, and frustrations more readily than we might pay attention to the joys, delights, and successes in our work. Cameron (2008) described how we are likely conditioned, for many reasons, to pay more attention to the negative than the positive. From this perspective, teacher leaders may need to learn how to pay sustained attention to the good in themselves, in their colleagues, and in their systems to experience the benefits that can come from an appreciative, strength-based, and positive approach to their work in school organisations.

Although Gordon likely had personal capacities and tendencies that shaped his desire to focus on strengths, build relationships, model healthy communication, and create space for fun—in other words, how to create conditions for colleagues to flourish together through their collaborations for improving student learning—flourishing mindsets can be learned and developed through ongoing attention and practice (Dweck, 2006; McGonigal, 2015). In this next section, I offer a series of reflective questions that may serve as a guide, or structure, for growing mindsets that may be useful for building and sustaining positive teacher leadership. I describe these questions next, followed by some concluding thoughts about what it might mean to develop positive teacher leadership as and for flourishing.

Inside-Outside Appreciative Questions: Developing Teacher Leadership for Flourishing

A central tenet of our research on flourishing in schools is that shifting the language we use toward an appreciative and positive perspective can lead to a shift in behaviour in that same direction (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). I have described elsewhere how using a series of four questions can provide new ways of seeing our agency and influence as leaders with a focus on growing more of what we want in our work and life (Cherkowski, Hanson & Kelly 2014). We adapted these questions from research findings in business settings where Lencioni (2007) aimed to understand why it was that some work settings contributed to miserable work. He found three conditions of work that were prevalent among those who seemed to experience their job as miserable— anonymity, inability to see contributions to the organisation, and a lack of feedback in the workplace. Thinking back to the description in the introduction of stress and burnout for teachers, teachers who feel they are not seen, valued, appreciated, nor given opportunities to keep growing and learning may feel a sense of miserable-ness about their work. Shifting toward a more appreciative perspective, and using findings from positive psychology, positive organisational scholarship, and learning community research provided theoretical insights for what it might mean to work in a flourishing school—a sense of being known, an awareness of difference-making, a feeling of appreciation, an acknowledgement of contributions, and ongoing opportunities for professional learning and growth.

Offered here, within the context of this special issue of re-imagining teacher leadership for the challenges and complexities of education in the 21st Century, I suggest that these questions can serve as a structure, or guide, for developing or shifting mindsets toward positive teacher leadership for flourishing in schools, focusing first inward on self and then moving the reflections outward to others:

- Am I seen? Do I see others? (being known)
- Am I contributing my strengths? Do I help others to contribute their strengths? (difference-making)
- Am I learning and growing? Do I help others to learn and grow? (professional learning)
- Am I seeking feedback? Do I give feedback? (appreciation and acknowledgment)

From an appreciative perspective, these questions serve as an inquiry into the learning conditions in the school, where reflecting on them can lead to a desire to craft work, where possible, for self and others, in ways that create more opportunities for further living out these questions (Cherkowski, Hanson, & Walker, 2018). Conceptualising teacher leadership as learning to grow cultures of wellbeing for all through reflecting on these questions may offer opportunities for teachers to co-construct school cultures where teachers and all others feel known, appreciated, validated, and encouraged to grow and learn. This inquiry approach to teacher leadership reflects the research on the benefits of teacher-led professional learning for improving schools at the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and the institutional level (Durrant et al., 2000; Frost, 2012; Muijs & Harris, 2006). This does not mean that teacher leaders are the only people responsible for leadership for wellbeing, but that there might be benefits and potentials to developing mindsets for building community capacity for wellbeing for all through inquiring into how we flourish at work. Many of the participants in our study indicated that engaging in

conversations with their colleagues about what they most love and what matters most to them in their work contributed to growing even more positive feelings about their work and their colleagues (Cherkowski, Walker & Hanson, in press). This aligns with research showing that doing kind acts and connecting in positive ways to improve the lives of others provides benefits to those receiving and those extending the positive acts (Lyubomirsky, 2007), and how contributing to growing wellbeing in others can promote and encourage others to do the same (Cameron, 2012). Positive teacher leadership, with an attention toward growing wellbeing, might serve as a capacity-builder for growing more wellbeing in schools—as teacher leaders work with others to grow wellbeing for all they are likely to benefit as well from their positive leadership in service of improving teaching, learning, and living well together in schools.

The four guiding questions offer reflective opportunities for teacher leaders to grow wellbeing at work, their own and others', as central to what it means to engage in school improvement. Through ongoing inquiry, teacher leaders may come to a greater awareness of who they are and how they can be showing up at work in a more authentic way, engaging in ongoing learning and improvement, and seeking out feedback to gain a sense of accomplishment as they begin to notice the ways they are making a positive difference in the life of the school. As they gain confidence in asking these questions of themselves, they can start to shift the lens toward their colleagues to provide encouragement and support for them to engage in reflective learning, creating opportunities for generating collective capacity for growing wellbeing among many. As has been noted in recent research (Drago-Severson, 2016; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018), supporting educators to develop capacities for personal growth and development can be an important contributor to leadership development. These findings could be extended to include teacher leadership, although further research to ascertain that connection is needed. Similarly, Woods, Woods and Cowie's (2009) study of principal leadership development in Britain found that school leaders desire opportunities for reflecting with their colleagues about matters of the heart and soul of their work, aspects that they are not often afforded the time, space or encouragement to discuss. For the participants who were able to engage in these conversations during a special retreat for school leaders, they appreciated the opportunities for these kinds of connections that were not usually available to them. Teacher leaders would likely benefit from collective conversations about what matters most to them, and how they see themselves growing and developing through their leadership work. Offering intensive, immersive leadership retreats may not be feasible or reasonable, however providing opportunities for teacher leaders to connect with colleagues to reflect on what matters most to them may be a potentially powerful tool for ongoing leadership development. While more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of the questions in practice, the set of four questions offers a framework that may be useful in schools and classrooms to support and encourage teacher leaders to engage in reflective opportunities, and may be useful for bringing together teacher leader colleagues to talk with each other about the impacts and influences of this kind of reflective practice.

To be clear, this positive teacher leadership perspective does not deny the challenges and struggles of the work of teaching and leading in schools. There is no denying the difficulties, hardships, and challenges that come with any workplace, nor the negative or toxic organisational environments that employees may experience (Frost, 2003; Gallos, 2008). Rather, a positive organisational focus attends to the full human experience of those within organisations, with the aim of illuminating the conditions and dynamics that lead to growing more of what we seek for ourselves and others at work—resilience, vitality, compassion, deeper connections, and stronger relationships, meaningfulness, and purpose (Cameron & Caza, 2004, p. 3).

Concluding Thoughts: Supporting Positive Teacher Leadership Development

Teacher leadership development is an important area of research and practice to grow and sustain school improvement for and with teachers (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Certainly, teachers do have opportunities for formal and structured leadership development programs, such as those offered in the growing number of university graduate program courses and degrees on teacher leadership. Additionally, there are formal professional development programs for teacher leadership offered by private and non-profit groups, and a growing number of accreditation serves and requirements in some countries (such as the Teacher Leader Model Standards in the United States, Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2012) that promote a formal, regulated approach to teacher leadership development. These structured learning opportunities could serve as good platforms through which to develop ideas and capacities for positive teacher leadership through including material and practices on positive psychology and positive organisational scholarship. On a less formal level, teacher leadership development might also be understood as opportunities for personal reflection and development for individuals or small groups, particularly focused on how to notice and nurture wellbeing in self and others. This call for more attention to personal reflection as part of leadership development aligns with research findings on the importance of developing social-emotional learning for educational leadership for administrators (Drago-Severson, 2016; Goleman & Senge, 2014) and for teachers (Bridgeland, Bruce & Hariharan, 2013; Schonert-Reichl, LeRose, Kitil et al., 2014). Research on social-emotional learning and teacher leadership development may be an interesting avenue for further research on teacher leadership.

Returning to the connection between wellbeing and teacher leadership, I suggest that a conceptualisation of positive teacher leadership may offer opportunities to grow wellbeing (for self and others) as an important aspect of school improvement efforts. I offered a different and complementary perspective on teacher leadership grounded in the research on positive psychology and in positive organisations, showing the benefits and potentials for individuals and systems when focusing on what works well, brings vitality, and encourages strengths and human capacities for wellbeing such as compassion, kindness, caring, among many others. We live in an era where a combination of organisational and individual interventions targeted at reducing stress and promoting wellbeing among teachers is critical (Greenberg et al., 2016; Leijon et al., 2017). Given the growing awareness of a future that will be characterised by increasing uncertainty, rapid change, and more complex and interconnected systems and societies (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009; UNESCO, 2015), positive teacher leadership may provide a way forward toward flourishing for all in schools.

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