

Perceptions About Teacher Leadership: Do Teacher Leaders and Administrators Share a Common Ground?

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In 2010, the Mathematically Connected Communities Leadership Institute for Teachers (MC²-LIFT) started with a vision for preparing teachers to lead the construction of appropriate learning environments in their schools and districts (MC²-Lift Proposal, 2009). During this two-year program, MC²-LIFT prepared thirty-one K-12 mathematics teachers to be teacher leaders (TLs), and involved schools' administrative personnel as a way to support the TLs. To assess the impact of the program, we explored the common ground of teacher leadership perceptions between TL and administrators. Content Analysis methodology (Berg, 2009) was utilized to compare TL candidates and administrators' perceptions to a leadership survey on the second year of the program. Findings of the study indicated that there are some common grounds between TL and administrators, but still there are some perceptions that need to be addressed between TL and administrators to enhance teaching and learning.

Keywords: Teacher Leadership, Content Analysis, Teacher Leader, Shared Leadership

Teacher Leadership is a recent notion that many programs and funded grants started to emphasize in order to build teachers' capacity to have more influence within the school system. Many scholars are exploring its applications and benefits within the school dynamics. Therefore, as we start reviewing the literature about teacher leadership, we noticed that there is rather limited consensus on how to define teacher-leadership. This lack of consensus initially may reflect a difficulty of defining or describing the

roles and the characteristics of teacher-leader, but this is a wrong claim. We, as other scholars in the field, think that the lack of consonance exists due to the notion that teacher leadership is an umbrella term that covers a variety of teacher roles and characteristics that teachers assume (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett, & Roberts, 2010). For example, Danielson (2006) defined teacher leadership as:

Set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to other within their own school and elsewhere, it entails mobilizing and energizing others with the goal of improving school and elsewhere. It entails critical responsibilities relate to teaching and learning. (p.12)

While Danielson defined teacher-leadership in terms of how teacher-leaders informally influence students inside and outside of the classroom and beyond, York-Barr and Duke (2004) define it as more of a process that might happen formally or informally. York-Barr and Duke further state that teacher-leadership is “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other member of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (pp. 287-288).

In reviewing these definitions and many others, we found that despite the differences that exist between these definitions, there is a common thread that exists. This thread revolves around the idea that whether teacher-leader is leading formally or informally, s/he influences and contributes to improving teaching and learning, while performing various roles.

Given the extensive emphasis on the promotion of teacher-leadership, scholars and prominent observers examine and explore the potential benefit of teacher leadership. According to York-Barr and Duke (2004), teacher-leaders advance teaching and learning through modeling effective and engaging practices within their classes. Once teachers feel a sense of awareness and conscious in their role within their classes, schools, and communities, it increases their ownership and commitment toward enhancing teaching and learning (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Other prominent educational leadership scholars note that one of the great benefits having a teacher-leader within the school dynamics is that they serve as role-models and mentors for other teachers as they continue to build and enhance their leadership and organizational skills (Barth, 2001, and Darling-Hammond, 1988). In addition, Killion

and Harrison (2006) demonstrated that teacher-leaders assume a variety of roles that support school and student success. Some of the major roles they assume are: resource providers, instructional specialists, curriculum specialists, classroom supporters, learning facilitators, mentors, data coaches, catalysts for change, and learners. Killion and Harrison (2006) stated that while these roles might overlap and depend on the designated responsibilities, teacher-leader play a vital role in improving teaching and learning throughout the school.

While many scholars detailed the benefits of promoting teacher-leadership within the school systems (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Killion & Harrison, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), leadership scholars and practitioners detail the conditions that influence teacher leadership. Scholars argue that there are social and cultural contexts, interpersonal, and structural conditions that influence teacher leadership. First, within the social and cultural context, they demonstrated that the following conditions maximized teacher-leadership:

- 1) school-wide focus on teaching and learning (Moller, 2001),
- 2) teachers are valued and respected (Danielson, 2006), and
- 3) principals foster collaboration and support (York-Barr & Duke, 2006), encourage teachers to take initiatives (Katzenmyere & Moller, 2001).

Second, within the interpersonal conditions, York-Barr and Duke (2004) stated that positive relationship between teachers, colleagues, principals, and administrative staff foster teacher leadership capacity. Thirdly, for the structural conditions, it is about giving access to resources, available time, and space (LeBance & Shelton, 2001).

Given these aspects that addressed conditions or aspects that maximize teacher-leadership, it becomes apparent that teacher leaders cannot support school improvement or changes by working individually or without support from school administrators. This means that there has to be a kind of relationship or a common ground of understanding between teacher-leader and administrators to maximize

teacher-leader efforts toward enhancing teaching and learning. This idea of establishing common ground can be similar to the idea of creating leadership that is shared in terms of sharing the understandings about the role, responsibilities, and expectations of teacher-leader. The idea of having a common ground or shared leadership is vital to maximizing the efficiency of the work of teacher-leader; especially if we know that the rationale for shared leadership is grounded on the idea of sustainable school change (Fullan, 2006). As Fullan stated, “leadership must create changes that is embraced and owned by the teachers who are responsible for implementation within the classroom as it become increasingly clear that leadership at all level of the system is the key lever for reform, especially leaders who a) focus on capacity building and b) develop other leaders who can carry on” (Fullan, p. 33). Heck and Hallinger (2009) also asserted that sustainable school improvement must be supported by leadership that is shared with many stakeholders especially with teacher-leaders.

Therefore, with the detailed benefits of establishing a common ground of understanding between teacher-leader and administrators, educational researchers and policy makers explore how different avenues or models can lead to the creation of a shared leadership. For example, according to Jackson, Burrus, Bassett, and Roberts (2010), in order for teacher-leadership and shared leadership to be successfully implemented, it is crucial to have certain cultural intact. In specific, the scholars proposed that effective teacher-leadership needs to address the following aspects:

- 1) Training teachers to understand the role of teacher-leader.
- 2) Training principals to understand and facilitate the role of teacher-leaders because if the principal does not embrace the teacher-leader role, then it is unlikely the teachers will do so.
- 3) Training teacher-leaders to work with others and how to be effective team players within their schools.

Based on this model and many others that suggest the benefit of developing the notion of teacher-leader and the value of establishing a

shared leadership in the schools, many programs in the United States have been preparing teacher-leaders in different content areas. The Mathematically Connected Communities Leadership Institute for Teachers (MC²-LIFT), a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded program, is one of those programs that aim to train thirty-one K-12 mathematics teachers as mathematics teacher-leaders in a two year program.

During these two years, teachers take mathematics and education courses from a team of university faculty. Some of the education courses teacher-leader candidates take during the second year focus on developing teachers' leadership skills. School administrators, from teacher-leader candidates' schools, are then invited to participate in a series of meetings. The purpose of this invitation is for administrators to understand leadership perspectives on MC²-LIFT-based training as well as to participate in activities within mathematics and education courses. One of the program goals is for teacher-leader candidates and school administrators to have a common knowledge and perspective on teacher-leadership. Our study aims to understand the extent of teacher-leader candidates' and administrators' perceptions on teacher-leadership during and at the end of their participation in the institute.

MC²-LIFT Program

Mathematically Connected Communities-Leadership Institute for Teachers (MC²-LIFT) project started in 2010. The program consists of three teams that work collaboratively in preparing the mathematics teacher-leaders:

1. The course development team involved university mathematics and education faculty who design and implement the courses for the teachers.
2. The school support team involved faculty and staff who provide support to the teacher-leader candidates in their roles at the school settings.
3. The research team involved faculty and staff who study the impact of the institute at different levels such as student performance, teacher practices, and school environment.

The purpose of MC²-LIFT is to prepare two groups of about thirty K-12 teachers to become mathematics teacher-leaders at their schools and districts. The MC²-LIFT initiative designed a two-year program with the goal of increasing and expanding teachers' knowledge in mathematics and pedagogy, as well as to develop the leadership skills of the teacher-leader candidates. For each cohort, the program included two intensive summer institutes (three weeks long), and mathematics and education courses which the candidates took in fall and spring terms. In total, teachers took a total of fourteen courses. Assignments from the courses included projects with their students and/or colleagues at their school sites.

As part of the research team, we wanted to study teachers' and administrators' perceptions on teacher-leadership at the end of the program. More specifically, the purpose for this research was to explore the common ground between TL candidates' and school administrators' perceptions about teacher-leadership after completing the MC²-LIFT program.

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this study are both the TL candidates and the school administrators. Thirty-one teachers from five partner school districts in the southwest area of the United States were part of the cohort. Teachers in this group were from nine elementary schools, six middle schools and four high schools. Teacher leader candidates in the cohort included (15) K to 5th grade teachers, (10) 6th to 8th grade teachers, and (6) 9th to 12th grade teachers. In the cohort group, there were 24 female and 7 male teachers with teaching experiences ranging from 1 to 27 years.

The administrators in this study were representing LIFT teachers' schools. Administrators included principals, assistant principals, and/or professional development teachers. Between Summer 2011 and May 2012, administrators participated in five Saturday meetings from 9:15 am to 4:15 pm. These meetings allowed discussions on teacher-leadership literature and ways to connect this literature to administrators' experiences at their schools. Due to other responsibilities, not all

school administrators (or their representatives) were present during the data collection days.

Data Collection

Faculty involved in the course development team collaborated with members of the research team in creating a survey to study participants' perceptions on teacher-leadership. The Leadership Survey consisted of six open-ended questions regarding teacher leadership. The survey included questions regarding teacher-leadership in general as well as questions related to leadership at their own schools. The survey was administered on paper and during the participants' regular meeting time.

Teacher-leader candidates and school administrators completed the Leadership Survey twice. The first data collection was prior to the leadership course in Summer 2011; the second data collection was at the end of the two-year program, Spring 2012. Participants were allowed to take as much time as needed to answer the questions. On average, participants answered the survey in approximately 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

This study applied content analysis methodologies to understand and compare teachers' and administrators' perceptions about teacher-leadership. Utilizing inductive content analysis approach (Elo & Kyngas, 2007), researchers first analyzed TL candidates' and administrators' responses separately, and then compare the themes that emerged from each data set.

For each one of the six questions in the survey, two researchers, working individually, followed the inductive approach. Using the inductive analysis, researchers utilized an interpretative approach in which participants' responses were interpreted; in other words they were "extended to more *latent content*" (Berg, 2009, p. 343). Each researcher read the responses for each question in all data sets, then coded and created categories. Basically, using the open-coding method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) the categories were created for this study. Categories in a content analysis study are created for three specific purposes: to describe, to support understanding, and to create knowledge (Elo & Kingas, 2007). In this study,

the content analysis was done to describe participants' ideas, understand participants' perceptions on teacher-leadership, and learn about differences and similarities between the two groups of participants. For the purpose of the study, the answer to each single question was identified as the unit of analysis. Therefore, each researcher focused on one question at the time during the coding process. After categories were identified, researchers were able to describe participants' perceptions on teacher-leadership for each question.

In this inductive analysis, each researcher identified the categories individually for each question. After that, researchers met to discuss categories that each had found, final categories were discussed, and went back to individual coding. After the second coding process, researchers met again to discuss the codes and occurrences. In some cases, participants' responses were included in more than one category. In addition, if a participant's response included identification of more than one expression in one category, it was counted as one instance for that category.

After the inductive analysis of the responses, researchers developed matrices with the categories from each question that helped compare the datasets. A matrix was developed for each question, including the categories, number of occurrences and percentages. These matrices were utilized to compare datasets.

In this document, we are reporting results from the analysis of two of the six questions included in the survey. These questions were selected because in both of them participants indicated their perceptions about teacher-leaders' characteristics and responsibilities. And as described in the literature, teachers' responsibilities and characteristics are elements of teacher-leadership.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the common ground between TL candidates' and school administrators' perceptions about

teacher-leadership after completing their participation in the MC2-LIFT program. The data was collected on a survey including six questions. From our analysis we found that teachers hold some perceptions regarding of who is involved in the role of leadership (collective or individual effort), as well as perceptions on teacher-leader responsibilities and characteristics.

Findings reported in this study are from two questions in the given distributed survey. These questions are:

- 1- How do you define leadership? and
- 2- Describe the role and responsibilities of a teacher leader at your school. If you cannot think of a specific teacher leader, describe an ideal teacher leader.

In the section below, we present these findings in regard to participants' perceptions of the definition of teacher-leadership and then the findings regarding responsibilities and characteristics of a teacher-leader.

Findings 1– Definition of Teacher Leadership

From Question 1: "*How do you define leadership?*" we identified two main categories. These categories are called individual and collective leadership. Our differentiation of these categories was based on Lambert's (2003) distinction of defining teacher-leadership. According to Lambert, teacher-leadership can be interpreted as a team or as an individual assignment. And depending on how teacher leadership is interpreted, participants interact or participate on the leadership effort. So, if participant viewed teacher-leadership as an individual assignment we coded it as individually effort; but if he/she perceived it as a collective assignment, we coded it as collective effort.

Table 1 shows some examples of these categories, our coding as collective or as individual efforts.

Table 1
Examples of Collective and Individual Leadership Categories

Category	Example
Collective Effort	- Leadership is the foundation for continuous growth and change. Leadership is the global vision a productive group of people hold on to.
Individual Effort	- Teacher-leadership occurs when an instructor has a strong knowledge base of instruction <u>compiled</u> with strong methodology and strong interpersonal skills. These capacities, working together allow an instructor to command, respect and leadership on a staff.

Table 2, shows the results of how participants defined teacher-leadership at the end of the program. More than 87% of participants in both

groups defined teacher-leadership as an individual effort.

Table 2
Categories of Leadership or Teacher-Leader – Question One

Type of effort	TL Candidates		Administrators	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Collective	4	12.90%	1	11.11%
Individual	27	87.10%	8	88.88%
Total	31	100%	9	100%

Findings 2- Responsibilities and Characteristics of Teacher-Leader

In answering both questions one and three, TL candidates and administrators identified both: responsibilities and characteristics of a teacher-leader. In terms of teacher-leader responsibilities, eight categories emerged. These categories are: guide or facilitate a group, professional communication, change agent, knowledgeable of practices and/or content, data

driven, have students in mind, management, and being a link between administration and teachers. In term of teacher leaders’ characteristics, five categories emerged and those are: persuasive, open minded, interpersonal skills, willing to try/learn, and leading by example.

Examples of the categories regarding responsibilities and characteristics are provided in Table 3.

Table 3
Examples of Data Coding

	Category	Examples
Responsibilities	Guide and facilitate a group	- Lead a group - Assist a group
	Professional Communication	- Share ideas - Provide training to other teachers
	Change Agent	- Promote change - Support teachers as they change
	Knowledgeable of practices and content	- Have knowledge or expertise about practices and content - Highly knowledgeable about content and best teaching practices
	Data driven	- Use data to make decisions
	Students in mind	- Focus on student learning - Truly understands what's best for students
	Management	- Smooth operation of department. - Organizing team activities, fundraising, fieldtrips, and parent conferences.
	Link between administrators and teachers	- Communication between administrators and teachers - Open communication from department to administrators, if there are questions, finding information to answer our questions.
Characteristics	Interpersonal skills	- Good communicator - Listen to others
	Willing to try/learn	- Continuously seeking to improve their own practices - Shifting his/her own paradigms
	Open mind	- Being impartial - Take in thoughts and opinions/ideas of others with an open mind.
	Leading by example	- Lead by example - Someone I'm willing to follow to a place I would not go alone.
	Persuasive	- Influence others to do or see something the way you see it - Without effort persuade others to prescribe to ideas, methods or ideologies

Responsibilities: In Table 4, we present the counts of responsibilities only from TL candidates' dataset, and in Table 5 the counts from administrators' dataset. These two tables identified frequencies (#) and percentage (%) for

each category in question one (Q1), in question three (Q3), and the total from both of these questions (Total). Moreover, Table 6 includes the total frequencies for the responsibilities identified from both data sets.

Table 4
Frequencies of the Categories for Responsibilities Identified from Teacher Leader
Candidates - Question One and Question 3

Category	Q1		Q3		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Guide/Facilitate	14	50.0%	7	17.5%	21	30.9%
Professional Communication	7	25.0%	8	20%	15	22.0%
Change Agent	3	10.7%	2	5%	5	7.4%
Knowledgeable Practice and Content	1	3.6%	2	5%	3	4.4%
Data Driven	1	3.6%	4	10%	5	7.4%
Students in Mind	2	7.1%	5	12.5%	7	10.3%
Link between Adms. and Teachers	0	0%	5	12.5%	5	7.4%
Management	0	0%	7	17.5%	7	10.3%
Total	28	100%	40	100%	68	100%

Table 5
Frequencies of the Categories for Responsibilities Identified from Administrators on
Question One and Question 3

Category	Q1		Q3		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Guide/Facilitate	5	38.5%	1	7.1%	6	22.2%
Professional Communication	4	30.8%	7	50.0%	11	40.7%
Change Agent	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Knowledgeable Practice and Content	2	15.4%	0	0%	2	7.4%
Data Driven	2	15.4%	2	14.3%	4	14.8%
Students in Mind	0	0%	3	21.4%	3	11.1%
Link between Adms. and Teachers	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Management	0	0%	1	7.1%	1	3.7%
Total	13	100%	14	100%	27	100%

Table 6
Total Frequencies of the Categories for Responsibilities Identified from Teacher-Leader Candidates and Administrators

Category	Teacher Candidates		Administrators	
	#	%	#	%
Guide/Facilitate	21	30.9%	6	22.2%
Professional Communication	15	22.0%	11	40.7%
Change Agent	5	7.4%	0	0%
Knowledgeable Practice and Content	3	4.4%	2	7.4%
Data Driven	5	7.4%	4	14.8%
Students in Mind	7	10.3%	3	11.1%
Link between Adms. and Teachers	5	7.4%	0	0%
Management	7	10.3%	1	3.7%
Total	68	100%	27	100%

The comparison between the datasets was done by analyzing the number of counts of a category on both questions out of the number of all counts in each dataset on the total count instead of looking at information from each question, i.e. on the data set from the teachers' responses, 21 out of 69 counts of responsibilities were on the guide/facilitate category which is about 31 % of the counts (Table 4), and it is 22.2% from administrators' responses (six out of 27 counts) as indicated on Table 5. The reason for using only the total counts is that independent of the question where TL candidates and administrators refer to a specific category or responsibility, it indicated that the participant perceived it as a responsibility. A participant's response to question one may have indicated a responsibility that may not be identified in question three.

In comparing between TL candidates and administrators responses in relation to TL responsibilities, we identified some differences and similarities between the datasets (Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6). In terms of the differences, responsibilities such as change agent and link between administrators and teachers were identified from TL candidates' dataset (7.4% of the total counts), but they were not identified on the administrators' data set (0% of total counts). This finding may indicate that TL candidates and administrators have a

different perspective regarding teacher-leader role. According to one teacher "Anyone can be a leader in a school that is willing to corral a group of people into creating change or improving situations." Another teacher said "Begin yourself with the change you want to be."

On the other hand, similarities can also be identified between the datasets. The categories of guiding/facilitating and professional communication were found to be the two most often (about 41% of total counts) on both, TL candidates' and administrators' datasets. From these data, we conclude that both groups see teacher-leaders as teachers that organize and lead professional development meetings, share information with other teachers, and lead a group in a professional manner. One teacher said "A teacher's leader responsibilities include providing guidance to school staff on how to effectively look at data, standards, and assessments to promote student's learning." Another teacher said "leadership is the ability to guide individuals to complete a task or guide them toward a focus." A principal within the same group said about teacher leader "heads meetings or trainings, person others go to for advice or recommendation."

Characteristics: Comparing TL candidates and administrators responses, we also identified

differences and similarities regarding of characteristics of a teacher leader (Table 7, table 8, and Table 9). The biggest differences found are that a teacher leader needs to be *open minded* and *lead by example* for TL candidates (11.1% and 20% of the counts respectively), whereas on administrators dataset the characteristic of being *open minded* was not identified (0% of the counts) and *lead by example* was the second lowest count in the characteristics (7.1% of the counts). Moreover, *lead by example* is the second most often characteristic identified on TL candidates' dataset. One teacher said in relation to *lead by example* "those that set examples that others are naturally inclined to follow based on the work ethic, knowledge, commitment and core beliefs-hopefully centered on student success." A principal also said "is a role model for other teachers."

Similarities found between the TL candidates' and administrators' datasets on

teacher-leader characteristics are *interpersonal skills* and *persuasiveness*. The characteristic of *interpersonal skills* was found often in both data sets (44% of the counts on TL candidates' dataset, and 36% of the counts on administrators' dataset). The *persuasiveness* was found 9% of the counts in the teacher-leader dataset and 14% of the counts on the administrators' dataset. From these results, we argue that TL candidates and administrators identified the need for a teacher-leader to be a person who has the ability to relate with others in a positive way and who can make others to do what is needed at the school. A teacher said "Leadership is the ability to "naturally" or without effort persuade others to prescribe to ideas, methods or ideologies." A principal also said "Teacher-leadership is the skill of spreading knowledge in a ways that moves a department forward".

Table 7
Frequencies of the Categories for Characteristics Identified from Teacher-Leader Candidates on Question One and Question 3

Code	Q1		Q3		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Persuasive	3	15.8%	1	3.85%	4	8.9%
Interpersonal Skills	8	42.1%	12	46.15%	20	44.4%
Open Minded	3	15.8%	2	7.69%	5	11.1%
Willing to try	1	5.3%	6	23.08%	7	15.6%
Lead by example	4	21.0%	5	19.23%	9	20.0%
Total	19	100%	26	100%	45	100%

Table 8
Frequencies of the Categories for Characteristics Identified from Administrators on Question One and Question Three

Code	Q1		Q3		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Persuasive	1	16.7%	1	12.5%	2	14.3%
Interpersonal Skills	1	16.7%	4	50%	5	35.7%
Open Minded	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Willing to try	4	66.7%	2	25%	6	42.8%
Lead by example	0	0%	1	12.5%	1	7.1%
Total	6	100%	8	100%	14	100%

Table 9
Total Frequencies of the Categories for Characteristics Identified from Teacher-Leader Candidates and Administrators

Code	Teachers		Administrators	
	#	%	#	%
Persuasive	4	8.9%	2	14.3%
Interpersonal Skills	20	44.4%	5	35.7%
Open Minded	5	11.1%	0	0%
Willing to try	7	15.6%	6	42.8%
Lead by example	9	20.0%	1	7.1%
Total	45	100%	14	100%

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the common ground between teacher-leader candidates and administrators about perceptions on teacher-leadership at the end of their participation in the MC2-LIFT program. One of the purposes of MC2-LIFT program was to work with these groups of participants to create a kind of shared vision and understanding about the role of teacher leaders to facilitate the work of teacher leaders at their schools. First, we identified that most of the participants (TL candidates and administrators) perceive leadership as an individualistic effort. According to the literature, one definition of teacher leadership is that it is an *exclusive role of a person* (Lambert, 2003), and this definition concur with the idea that leaders need to understand who they are, reflect on their role in

order to be able to embrace the expectations as a leader. In a more inclusive definition, York-Barr and Duke (2004) state that teacher-leadership is “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other member of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increase student learning and achievement” (p. 287-288). Thus, it is important to emphasize here that in defining teacher-leadership as an individual effort, we do not see this notion to be problematic because leaders are supposed to reflect and think of themselves as an individual in the process of being conscious and aware of their leadership capacity.

Though, what we find to be problematic is that what if teacher-leader’s view of leadership may limit their roles and capacity based on how

they define leadership. Our concern of how teachers define leadership resides with Lambert's (2003) speculation that teacher reactions to school leadership are different depending on how they define leadership, if it is related to the role of a particular person at the school - *exclusive role of a person*- or to the work of a group of people - *inclusive perspective*. Leadership has been understood as a person's skills or characteristics, which indicates that it is related to just one person and not the group of people involved in the activity. Teachers usually do not identify themselves as leaders, under this definition (Lambert, 2003). However, if understood as a more inclusive process, leadership engages more people and collaboration. Following Lambert's idea, in our participants' case, we found that teacher-leaders are working more individually than having a group to participate and collaborate in the role as leaders. We propose that if these perceptions persist in this context after their participation in the program, then the role of teacher leadership, as an individual effort, may complicate responsibilities and relationships within the school community toward enhancing teaching and learning.

In addition to that, the lack of consistency on defining teacher-leadership or teacher-leader that resided between teacher-leaders and administrators is not any area of concern that might limit teacher-leaders' ability to function. The lack of consonance exists due to the notion that teacher-leadership represents a big umbrella term that covers a variety of teacher roles and characteristics that teacher assume (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett, & Roberts, 2010). Specifically, within participants' understanding of leadership as an individual effort, specific responsibilities and characteristics emerged from the analysis of their data. From our data analysis, some responsibilities of teacher-leader emerged, and those are concurrent to Killion and Harrison (2006) research presented as roles that support schools and student success. From our study, the responsibilities that emerged were that teacher leaders should (1) guide and facilitate a group, (2) carry out professional communications, (3) be a change agent, (4) be data driven, (5) keep students in mind, (6) have management duties,

and (7) be a link between administrators and teachers.

From our analysis, in terms of describing the responsibilities of teacher-leader, our participants agreed that teacher-leader has to guide and facilitate groups as well as to carry out professional communication. At the same time, differences exist on how teacher-leader candidates and administrators describe other responsibilities of a teacher-leader after completing the MC2-LIFT program. For example, we did not find in this study that administrators perceive teacher-leader to be a change agent or a link between teachers and administrators, which means that principals did not view the roles and responsibilities of teacher-leader as a shared responsibility within their designated leadership roles. According to literature, the reason that principals are not able to see teacher-leader as a change agent or a link between the teachers and administrators can be due micro-politics, cultural, and structural barriers operating within the school system (Harris, 2004a). According to Harris, distributed leadership can be considered threatening to those in formal power positions, not only in terms of ego and perceived authority, but also because: 1) it places leaders in a vulnerable position by relinquishing direct control over certain activities, 2) the current school structures with the top-down hierarchies can prevent teachers from attaining autonomy and taking on leadership roles.

From the participants' perceptions about responsibilities of a teacher-leader, we can conclude that teacher-leader candidates and administrators were consistent in their answers indicating more often the responsibilities of guiding/facilitating a group, and professional communication. These are also commonly identified in the literature on teacher-leadership (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011; Whitsett & Riley, 2003; Wilmore, 2011), so the perceptions from our two groups of participants concur to what is expected regarding these responsibilities. Reason and Reason (2011) indicate that one way to see teacher leader is as a "*The Method Master*" leader which simply indicates that teacher leaders have the responsibility of being up dated to the content

and teaching practices. Moreover, teacher-leader as a *The Method Master* is not just knowledgeable, but cares about sharing with peers the knowledge.

We found that teacher-leader candidates were consistent with their answers indicating more often the characteristic as related to teacher-leaders' interpersonal skills. This result was clearly identified in both questions and both data sets. Even though interpersonal skills are a characteristic needed to be a good teacher-leader (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996), these skills may be challenged due to the change of role of a teacher becoming teacher-leader (Helterbran, 2010; Mullen & Jones, 2008). In addition, administrators, in general, seem to recognize willingness to try, learn or change as a characteristic of a teacher-leader. This characteristic of a teacher-leader is also indicated in the literature (Lambert, 2003; Mullen & Jones, 2008). Administrators' perception about a teacher-leader having the characteristics of leading by example was found less often than in TL candidates' responses on the leadership survey. Literature on teacher-leadership indicates that leading by example as a needed characteristic to be a teacher-leader (i.e. Boles & Troen, 1996; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011; Teitel, 1996).

Overall, it seems that there are some differences on how teacher-leader candidates and administrators perceive responsibilities and characteristics of a teacher-leader. These differences may indicate some difficulties for teacher-leaders to do their job at their schools. Clear communication between teacher leaders and administrators is needed to be able to accomplish their role at the school (Lambert, 2003; Teitel, 1996).

Conclusion

Based on the findings from this study, it becomes evident that leadership preparation aspect of the MC2-LIFT program is effective, but can be improved. Even though we found some differences between teacher-leader candidates and administrators on their perceptions regarding some responsibilities and characteristics of a teacher-leader, we found that participants from both groups identified

important responsibilities and characteristics of a teacher-leader that are identified in the literature.

This study shows that after a year of teacher-leader candidates and administrators participating in a leadership program, there were similarities in their perceptions about teacher-leadership. One part that is similar is that both groups define teacher-leadership as an individual effort. Neither principals, nor teacher-leader candidates identify leadership as a collective effort. Based on these findings we recommend that teacher-leadership program needs to emphasize creating shared leadership. We believe that leadership should be a shared responsibility so that students are better served when teacher-leader and administrators are able to contribute to improved teaching and learning throughout their school. Teachers can lead formally or informally, but yet in all cases, teacher-leadership must be coordinated with the actions of other leaders in their contexts. School environment may be affected if administrators and teacher-leaders do not share the same expectations regarding responsibilities and/or characteristics of a teacher-leader. Clear communication is needed to have teacher-leaders and school administrators working for the same goal (Teitel, 1996). It is important here note that creating a common ground of understanding between teacher-leader and administrators is a powerful concept that cannot be ignored. Part of the reason resides in the fact that it is a fairly new addition to the leadership field and although studies are underway, the current evidential base is to examine how this common ground can enhance teaching and learning.

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