The importance of professional development and leadership skills improving of a t...

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Ideas on how an organization should operate have changed, developed and varied throughout the years. Typical bureaucratic organization management found today in non-profit organizations is one person responsible, leading and in authority of decision making and financial issues. This has led to a lack of staff professional development to teachers, who certainly follow the old banking model system of education, along with no leadership skills of staff which unquestionably threatens the school's reputation as a successful learning organization and affect students' education. Researches confirm that professional development is the main core strategy that schools should use to ensure that educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career. The most effective professional and leadership development engage teams of staff to focus on students' needs, problems and learn to solve them. Some argue that the bureaucratic approach can have a long-term positive impact, but Swieringa and Wiersma (1992) once reflected that the bureaucratic form of organization separates thinking, deciding from doing and reflecting. A centralized school system where the principal, administration, and teachers are in slight control and most major decisions are made by the central bureaucracy management, have turned staff into good ' followers of the rules, not great managers and instructional leaders'. Lack of management talent and practice can have major consequences over time, even the most talented individuals lose it when they do not practice their decision making and leadership abilities. Distributive Leadership makes a difference not only through management matters but indirectly related to students outcomes. A non-profit centralized system where school expenditures have to go through extensive approvals

from the system and the ministry of education results in a main major problem which is the lack of staff development in teaching practice and leadership skills. Since it's not essential to the centralized management that staff (principals, administration, and teachers) make their own decisions, staff professional and leadership development were never taken into consideration. This model creates a system that is often inefficient and ineffective at meeting the needs of the students and the success of the school as a learning organization.

Does all the above have an effect on the school system? It certainly does, in such a business, the customer is the student yet following this system is rarely about the students' needs and requirements. As teachers, administration and principals are the closest to the students' social, educational and emotional needs and necessities yet they are not authorized to be part of the decision-making process which negatively affects students and their learning. An additional key aspect, in order for any organization to be successful it must be able to attract the most talented and highly skilled professionals around. The ' brightest and the best' are the ones leaving the profession, either for not willing to fight the system or professional development is required. In order for them to survive the market demand and surroundings, professional development is a must.

In his book, The Fifth Discipline Senge points out that in today's world characterized by constant change, organizations that are excelling are those that have adopted new management styles and philosophies. The process of adapting to rapid change has led to success in a chaotic world. Relating to

the prior statement; if the school wants to see students' achievement take place and improvement of the learning organization, the system must be changed and improved. Professional empowerment should be in the hands of the educators who work with and are aware of the student's needs. We need a system that empowers principals and teachers to deliver a great education to students. To be able to achieve that we should be giving teachers and principals the freedom to practice their independent professional judgment. This can be implemented through professional development; Senge (1990) believes that an organization must learn in order to make it in today's climate and become what he calls a learning organization. As being a part of such a bureaucratic system and an eager recipient of professional development, it is suggested that approaches should start with exploring and discussing with other staff members their ideas, skills and needs to perform better. Receiving and exchanging information and knowledge is the start of professional development and learning among teachers. We can start by giving the management ideas on how the system can be changed and how professional development can make a difference not only in teachers practice but also in the success of the organization. The management needs to understand, that there are key relationships in the ways in which school leaders strengthen teacher recruitment and development to teachers satisfaction, leadership and improvement. Professional development can motivate teachers and allow them to implement better and effectively inside the classrooms and lead better within the school system. Allowing and teaching teachers how to implement distributive leadership leads to school effectiveness, improvement, and developed organization learning. Having

School leaders and skilled well supported members of the school can be a major influence of the successful and effectiveness factors. They will help foster a sense of ownership towards the school and a purpose in the way that teachers approach their job.

How can the school develop a process for professional development that is democratic and meets teacher and student needs?

Pinchot (1994) addresses this: ' Despite all its successes, respect for bureaucracy is declining. As in so many other areas of life, what brought great success in the past has become the limitation of today. Suddenly everyone knows that bureaucracy is slowing us down and keeping our organizations internally focused and uncreative. It is time to question bureaucracy'. It is the beginning of a journey and a great opportunity for organizations to leave behind the bureaucratic system and become more productive and effective. It should start with relying on a system that develops and express the intelligence, judgment, collaborative abilities, and responsibility of their members. Changing the structure does not mean rearranging the organization chart in a new hierarchical pattern but focusing on liberating the potential of people working within the organization. The focus of the change will provide the conditions for staff being able to learn in order to freely lead. MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) in their studies on school effectiveness, they argued that the system and culture of schools can separate people and prevent them from working coherently and collegially. The bureaucratic management approach can be one strong reason for this. Organizations work the way they work because of the way people do. Rules

and regulations will not eliminate problems within the school even if they are changed. The difficulties that schools face are more deeply influenced by the kinds of mental models, and the relation between the staff members and the management who oversees the schools. The real challenge facing schools is not only how to improve but more importantly how to sustain improvement.

To improve a school system, you must look first to the way people think and interact together before changing the rules. Otherwise, the new policies and organizational structures will fade away over time and the organization will revert to the way it was. Schools that train people to obey authority and follow rules unquestionably and not being part of the decision-making process, will have poorly prepared their students to be involved in the world we live in. Sustainability will depend upon the school's internal capacity to maintain and support development work of staff, this leading to improvement in leadership capabilities of the many rather than the few. Seyomer Sarason (1990) argues that effective school reform cannot happen until people move beyond superficial conceptions of educational systems. They should recognize the unseen values and attitudes about power, privilege, and knowledge that keep existing structures, regulations, and authority relationships in place. If there are not fundamental shifts in how people think and interact, as well as how they accept and explore new ideas through discussions or professional development, then things will not add up correctly. Reducing the bureaucracy management approach, the first aim should be targeting having a team learning discipline. Having a group of staff who interact through dialogue and skillful discussions, will transform their

collective thinking and learning into energetic and effective actions. Team learning can be fostered during staff meetings, in classrooms and between parents and teachers.

According to David Pedder and John MacBeath (2008) article on school effectiveness and improvement, one of the main characteristics of schools promoting learning how to learn (LHTL) is promoting self-evaluation policy. It is essential for schools to start getting to know themselves better and grasp the vital connections between learning in classrooms, schools' management and the surrounding network. School self-evaluation stimulates the concept of double-loop learning in which it helps teachers explore and challenge the beliefs and knowledge that shape their own practice and the practice of the school. When teachers start evaluating themselves, modifying their words, reorder their thinking, look for evidence to support their ideas and practice risk-taking decisions: This is called learning. The more teachers participate in school wide decision making, the higher the faculty morale and the greater the participation and commitment to carry out school goals. Building a learning leadership environment has a key challenge, it should start with creating the space and climate for school staff to reflect on and share aspects of their practice as mentioned before. This includes boosting and encouraging dialogue and risk-taking. Schools should start promoting the learning autonomy among teacher. Teachers have to start learning new knowledge, develop skills and reassess their roles. Teachers need to learn and get the support from their schools. A sense of the importance that learning show to learn is necessary and essential for staff as well should be

created, and show them how this can affect the school bureaucratic system and gradually dismiss it.

The idea of schools that can learn has become gradually more prominent during the past few years. It is becoming clear that schools can be reconstructed, improved, and sustainably renewed not only by command or regulations but by taking a learning orientation approach. During the past few years, people in many organizations have been called upon to act with greater autonomy, to draw their own conclusions, to lead as well as follow and to risk failure in decision making, so that they can build up capabilities for future successes. These are the skills that any learning organizations should demand.

Professional development and learning are most effective when it is involved in the context of educators' daily work. When learning is an important part of the school day, educators are engaged in the growth of the mind-set. 'Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other' so wrote John F. Kennedy in November 1963. In order to have successful leaders, they need to learn and leaders learn as they lead. When thinking about the relationship between leadership and learning, the leadership of others involves being first able to lead oneself. Self- learning and professional development is the start of leading. They are mutually embedded, so that as we learn we become more confident in sharing with and leading others. And as we lead we continuously reflect on and enhance our learning. Leadership as viewed today is an activity involving the member of the organization being influencing one another, taking the initiative of decision making on behalf of

others, offering services, making moral choices for the wider good and modeling learning practices and behavior. Professional development can start with the school having learning teams. On a learning team , teachers and school leaders work together to use data to understand what students are not learning and what they need , and to find instructional gaps and to discuss and learn how to close those gaps. Learning team members should set pit what they need to know and what to do to improve. They may work with a knowledgeable person from the school system, a successful teacher within the school, or from another school, or with an expert from a local college/university, or with a consultant. Team members also can engage in self-directed learning such as conducting research, observing effective instruction at another school or to professional practitioners, or attending a conference or workshop. The team learning allows time, likely over the course of many weeks, to make sure educators learning is effective and intensive. The professional development is now more relevant when the staff members are able to analyze and discuss more with their fellow peers. They involve and discuss what they are learning and their experiences in using what they learned. They engage in an ongoing cycle of improvement. An organization with staff who allow self-evaluation, discussion and shared experiences as well as professionally developed and have leadership skills will eventually allow the senior leaders and management to ' hand out' or delegate certain roles and functions to others. Distributed leadership among people will dismiss bureaucracy over time and influential interactions arising will result in valued learning.

How can professional development enhance teacher leadership skills?

Schools functions better when there are formal and informal leaders taking steps to operate and improve the organization. When teachers take the initiative to care about more than just their class and their students, big differences can be made. One of the most congruent findings from studies of effective leadership in schools is that authority to lead need not to be located in the person of the leader, but can be dispersed within the school in between and among people. Teachers' leadership is the process by which expert educators take on roles at the classroom, school or even within the community. It has progressively becomes a key vehicle for school improvement as teachers share leadership roles while implementing and supporting school improvement initiatives. Improving leadership skills of teachers need two types of support: the school system support and professional development support. Informal teacher leaders define success not just by what happens in the classroom but by success throughout the school. When school system is improved and its ideology allows teachers to participate in the decision- making process, teacher' leadership skills become more effective in developing problem solving and interactive communication. Along with positive support from school, teacher leaders still need external professional development programs.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) claimed that teacher leaders need support to overcome some obstacles, like building new relationships with colleagues and learning to accept and respect colleagues' insights. Accordingly, when teachers are trained, they develop their own leadership characteristics and

also benefit other teachers and students (Learning Teams). Research studies by Berry, B. (2016) state that there are some conditions for teacher leadership to take place : (1) a vision and strategy for teacher leadership ; (2) supportive management and administrative leadership ; (3) appropriate resources as professional development; (4) supportive working relationships ; (5) constructive organizational politics blurring roles of teaching and leading ; and (6) a school- and system- wide orientation toward inquiry and risk taking. Taken those conditions in consideration will help teachers to lead in order to advance profession, improve educator effectiveness and to access great teaching and learning to all students. To maximize teacher impact on students and school success, accomplished teachers must have defined opportunities to share their professional knowledge and expertise with colleagues. One way to increase collaboration is to establish a system where teachers learn how to learn (LHTL) in order to lead successfully as mentioned before. Promoting professional learning development is a successful way to give teachers the opportunities to lead and grow to best serve the students and the school they work in. " Not only making learning possible for others but, in important ways, are learning a great deal themselves. Stepping out of the confines of the classroom forces these teacher-leaders to forge a new identity in the school, think differently about their colleagues, change their style of work in a school, and find new ways to organize staff participation".

Once teachers are altered from being just teachers to teacher leaders their vision change and improve. The first difference between a teacher and a

teacher leader is how they vision their school. A teacher often possesses a staunch " My classroom, my students" mentality. This mentality focuses on how a teacher can best serve the students entrusted to them, and it implies a high degree of ownership over their classroom, curriculum, and student success. The teacher leader, on the other hand, thinks " Our students, our school." This mentality embraces a bigger picture. Instead of strictly thinking about their individual classrooms, their focus is on the entire system that facilitates their teaching. While the teacher rightly feels ownership and responsibility for their classroom, the teacher leader feels ownership and responsibility over the school. When teachers are professionally developed to be leaders they can identify problems, weaknesses and solve them as well as identify opportunities and work on them. They gain more confidence in themselves and their abilities to perform and take decisions. Through professional development and creating learning teams, teachers now receive moral support from peers and school administration. This promotes an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff , establishing a school structure that promotes participative decision making , supporting delegating and distributive leadership , and encouraging teacher decision- making autonomy.

How can improving teachers' leadership skills have an impact on students?

Barth (2001) notes that teacher leadership has a snowball effect on student leadership by serving as roles models. Moreover, teacher leaders felt valued in their work and were able to develop support systems among their students and fellow peers. When discussed in terms of characteristics, rather

than roles, teacher leaders demonstrate a focus on student learning, a propensity to develop and maintain relationships, an ability to plan, organize and lead change, and an understanding of policy and politics. Leaders also share common characteristics including sense of empowerment that they could bring out change, they have a desire to work for change and are passionate about it as well as embrace their improved knowledge and skills into their students for an effective change.