BECOMING A TEACHER: HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE SELF AS A LEADER IS A CLASSROOM

Vilma Zydziunaite
Vytautas Magnus University, Klaipeda State University of Applied Sciences,
Lithuania St. Loyola of Ignatius University of Applied Sciences, Lithuania

Lina Kaminskiene
Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Vaida Jurgile
Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Tetiana Ponomarenko
Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Abstract. *The notion of 'teacher leader in a classroom' recently has been shifted. In the past, teacher leadership in a classroom was limited to didactics and expertise. Teachers have long served as 'executors', 'executants', not 'leaders' who are capable to manage the change and co-creation of knowledge within the interaction with students in a classroom.*
The aim of the study is to provide the descriptive analysis on contemporary research-based development regarding teacher leadership with the focus on concepts such as 'becoming a teacher', 'professionalism of a teacher', 'co-creation' and 'teacher leadership'.
Methods. The study is based on descriptive theoretical analysis.
Conclusion. Becoming a teacher is the continuous process and means accepting the challenge of imparting knowledge and guidance and approaching a high degree of ambivalence as it requires great diligence on the part of the teacher to be able to carry out her / his professional responsibilities. Co-creation is inseparable part of both - becoming a teacher and being a teacher leader as it helps to support the positive teaching-learning relationships and create the effective learning environments. Teacher leadership in a classroom is impossible to implement without self- recognition, which means in teaching practices teacher's self-awareness.
Keywords: *becoming; being; co-creation; learner; teacher leadership; teaching.*

Introduction

Relevance / importance of a topic. To be a teacher means to find personal fulfillment, receive community respect and to have the opportunity to interact with multiple learners on a daily basis (Zeiger, 2019). If the teacher wants to be a leader, s/he must connect with learners and reach them on multiple levels, because the teacher leader is committed to her / his learners' well-being both inside and

outside the classroom (Danielson, 2007). Recently, world-wide research publications provide considerations on different roles for teachers as leaders (Allensworth & Miller, 2002) and could be divided into several directions:

- attributes - being positive (Lumpkin, Claxton, & Wilson, 2014), being open (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000), being peaceful (Barth, 2001), being sociable (Keller, 2011), being organized (Allensworth & Miller, 2002), being accommodative (Danielson, 2006), being creative (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002);
- traditional roles - controller, assessor, coach, tutor, organizer, facilitator, counselor, instructor, examiner, mentor, disciplinarian, performer, observer (Parlar, Cansoy, & Kılınç, 2017);
- unconventional roles - provider of experiences, motivator, arbiter, balancer, prompter, participant, rapport builder (Zeiger, 2019);
- capabilities - exploiting her / his talents as a visual teaching aid to incorporate mime, gesture and expression to convey meaning and atmosphere in the classroom (Danielson, 2007), being culturally aware (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Research issue. The notion of 'teacher leader in a classroom' recently has been shifted. In the past, teacher leadership in a classroom was limited to didactics and expertise. Teachers have long served as 'executors', 'executants', not 'leaders' who are capable to manage the change and co-creation of knowledge within the interaction with students in a classroom (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001). Traditional roles of teachers are not flexible and are focused on teacher's skills, habits, personal features, what means external variables that do not manifest the full-value picture of a teacher leadership (Barth, 2001).

The aim of the study is to provide the descriptive analysis on contemporary research-based evidence regarding teacher leadership with the focus on concepts such as 'becoming a teacher', 'professionalism of a teacher', 'co-creation' and 'teacher leadership'.

Methods. The study is based on descriptive theoretical analysis.

Becoming a teacher: particular capabilities of a teacher leader in a classroom

Teacher is someone who helps learners to learn new things. Usually teachers are people who have a specific education and training to do that job, but we might consider as a teacher every person we can learn something new from (Cowley, 2011).

The notion 'becoming a teacher' is wrapped up with schooling and schools. The problem is that becoming a teacher involves formal and informal sides. Both sides are taken for granted, but the informal side receives the minimum attention usually and the teacher rarely seeks to keep the balance between formal and informal sides, and then s/he limits her / his leadership in the classroom and outside it (Hattie, 2009).

The formal side is the formally acquired education and the received certificate or diploma, which advocates the acquired qualification, the compulsory competencies by the individual and provides the formal professional right for the person to work in teacher's professional position (Corcoran et al., 2001). 'Becoming a teacher' is not limited up to implementation of formal teacher roles and professional objectives, and aims. To become a teacher the person (who is already formal teacher) needs to develop particular capabilities (Danielson, 2007). All these mentioned aspects are related to teacher leadership while 'becoming a teacher':

- Fostering the learning, which involves setting out with the intention of someone learning something and considering learners' feelings, experiences and needs. Teaching is only teaching if learners can take on what is taught (Cowley, 2011).
- Meeting the learner's learning needs, experiencies and feelings. Taking into account the learners' existing and foressen needs, is one of the things, which adds value to teaching (Didau, 2015). For teacher to become a teacher s/he must reflect on what might be good for learners and plan their educational interventions accordingly. Teacher needs to be attentive to learners' feeling, emotions, experiences because the teaching professional is productive only if s/he is open (Nuthhall, 2007). Incorporating the learners' experiences into the contexts of teaching / learning subjects means teaching here and now and this is fundamental to 'becoming a teacher' process (Hattie, 2009).
- Making specific educational interventions concerns the process of taking defined and purposeful action in a learning by having a explicit focus, when the teacher tries to teach in ways that facilitate the teaching/ learning and concentrate the learners' focus on the subject or issue, which they must to solve through learning (Didau, 2015).
- Empowering the self is a central principle in teacher leadership, with improvement in teaching / learning resulting in higher learners' achievements. If teachers embrace curricular, instructional, and assessment aims, then they are more accept different levels of leadership responsibilities, commit to ongoing professional development, and help shape change in educational practice to benefit learners (Lumpkin et al., 2014).

- An understanding of emotional and cognitive self-awareness (self-recognition) leads to a recognition of how that awareness impacts teacher's decision-making and behaviors. Teacher leaders implement the self-assessment, which includes knowing one's strengths and limitations, resulting in stronger self-confidence, self-worth, and self-esteem. Teacher's self-awareness incorporates empathy and understanding for learners' emotions, experiences, attitudes and worries (Zeiger, 2019).
- Possessing a genuine solicitude for their colleagues teachers. A desire to support the excellence of other teachers is a visionary goal, enhanced by a professional respect and care for their professional fellows (The Teacher Leadership Competencies, 2014).
- Turning research into action, when teachers leaders can analyze data and create action-based plans that help learners and the school to improve. This methodological skill helps teachers to look objectively to learning achievements of learners, and use the statistical data to find directions for improvement (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001).

Thus teacher leadership includes but is not limited up to managing teaching and learning, and resource allocation. Teachers leaders lead by engaging, inspiring, and motivating learners and fellow teachers to become more effective and efficient through their educational (teaching and learning-based) actions.

Becoming a teacher: professionalism of a teacher leader in a classroom

Professionalism is defined as an employee's attitudes and behaviors towards her / his job (Hargreaves, 2000), individual's knowledge and skills peculiar to a specific field and taking the responsibility for her / his professional improvement (Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). Professionalism has a wide range of application areas related to community service, expertise, professional standards, and selection, supervision and autonomy in going into the profession (Parlar, Cansoy, & Kılınç, 2017).

For Poekert (2012) teacher professionalism is related to creating effective teaching practices, learning environment and improving professional knowledge, and skills to provide learners with richer learning experiences, meeting the learning needs of learners, developing a high-level commitment to the teaching profession, and having an adequate level of autonomy in the decision-making process. Evans (2011) examined teacher professionalism in three dimensions: behavior (the degree to which teachers could fulfill the requirements of the profession, i. e. the actions planned, implemented, evaluated, and developed by teachers for improving learners' learning), attitude (perspective and perception of a teacher concerning the profession), and intellectuality (having the knowledge and skills

required by the profession, improving themselves continuously, having a command of their field, and following closely the developments in the field).

Teacher professional behaviors emerge as a whole when individual qualities come together with the experiences of the individual and refer to all kinds of attempts aimed at improving teaching, and emphasize teachers' commitment to their profession, professional cooperation and high objectives for teaching (Tschannen-Moran, Parish, & DiPaola, 2006). Teacher professionalism includes autonomy, what means that teachers should behave autonomously in the processes of planning, implementing, and evaluating teaching (Danielson, 2006), and this is inseparable from teacher leadership in a classroom and beyond.

Teacher leadership needs to be supported by the school administration and the school community through cooperation, collaboration (Poekert, 2012). The professionalism is associated with teachers' attempts to bring learners' learning to a higher level at school. Teachers' professional behaviors, as a manifestation of professionalism, can develop in a school culture that supports teacher leadership (Lumpkin et al., 2014). A school culture in which professional development is considered important and is supportive leads to positive changes in classroom practices of teacher leadership (Hopkins, 2007).

Along with a school culture in which teacher leadership is supported, some changes are implemented in the professional behaviors of teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning because in such school environment issues and mistakes are treated as learning tools and a cooperative environment for teachers, learners and all the school community (Wagner, 2006). Teachers get the opportunity to learn and create professional relationships with teachers, learners, school administration, and share good teaching and learning practices (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). In this context, teacher leadership becomes evident through increase of professional identity and self-awareness, cooperation and professional support among teachers, thus teachers can use what they learn to increase the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teachers exhibit professional behaviors and this is associated with a school culture that promotes teacher leadership because professional cooperation and solidarity among teachers provide collaborative learning, and the supportive atmosphere for teachers at the school encourages them to use innovative teaching, which helps teachers to take more responsibility for learners' learning (Wagner, 2006).

Becoming professional teacher is a lifelong challenge. Thus becoming a teacher is a process more than an outcome of teacher leadership and it is a way of encountering new pupils and new classroom problems and of finding meaning and solutions to them as through these processes teachers grow as leaders in a classroom and beyond.

Becoming a teacher: co-creation in the classroom by a teacher leader

Co-creation means engaging learners as active partners in learning. Thus learning in a classroom is a collaborative process among the teacher and learners who act as co-constructors of knowledge (Willis & Gregory, 2016). Co-creation recognizes and assimilates the knowledge that learners bring to the classroom (McCulloch, 2009). Co-creation can play the productive role in developing teaching and learning design, content of a subject, and assessment methods. It can stimulate learners to do research into the specific subject of learning. These attributes support the view that co-creation expands the pool of knowledge held traditionally by schools and teachers, transforming the learning experience into something that adds value for learners, as they are active participants in knowledge co-creation in the classroom and beyond (Bovill, 2013).

Co-creation in teaching and learning in a classroom means engaging learners to actively cooperate, collaborate, discuss and higgle with the teacher and each other (Bowill & Woolmer, 2018). In co-creation-based teaching and learning, the parameters of a lesson, such as aim, objectives, attitudes, achievable outcomes are herewith considered. This process creates the authentic culture of teaching and learning in a classroom, and means the shared responsibility for learning (Bovill, 2013).

Through co-creation the learning and teaching are experienced and implemented as a shared attempt as they are done with learners not to or for learners (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). Co-creation has the potential to significantly enhance the learners' learning experience by creating a sense of a learning community in a classroom. This is particularly likely where learners are involved in learning development and research, and cooperate, and collaborate with teachers. The partnership between the learner and teacher provides an opportunity for both parties to work as equals and equivalent, and develop a strong learning culture-based relationships (Bovill & Woolmer, 2018).

What is the meaning of relating the co-creation and a teacher leadership in a classroom? It is important to emphasize on the aspect how teachers and learners may need to adapt their thinking about learning to serve for the process and outcomes of co-creation, a world where the teaching / learning achievements of an individual teacher and / or learner may come through the shared efforts of learners to which belongs teacher. Thus for teacher being a part of learners' group means implementation of leadership in a classroom here and now through collaborating, cooperating, discussing, negotiating, sharing, distributing and / or serving as professional (McCulloch, 2009).

In teaching and assessment usually are used the traditional methodologies what are focused on the traditional roles of teacher and learner, and learning achievements of the learner. Adoption of co-creation approach in teaching and

learning is changing traditional understanding to recognition that personal teacher's and learner's performances are and will be based upon one's ability to collaborate, cooperate, share within the groups and / or teams of learners, to counterbalance the value of learning through relationships between the teacher and learners in a classroom (Dann, 2018).

Co-creation-based teaching and learning enable active, experiential and problem-based learning, which becomes specific to the context and sensitive to situation, and facilitates learners' engagement. This helps learners to develop new skills and confidence, and learn how to apply and manage knowledge in relation to their career decisions (Bovill, 2013).

How teacher could recognize the self as a leader is a classroom?

Recognition of the self means as self-awareness. It is an awareness of one's own personality or individuality and the ability to accurately judge one's own performance, actions and behavior, and to respond appropriately to different situations, issues, cases. It is a skill, which is important to teacher leader effectiveness in a classroom and beyond (Lopez, 2017). Self-awareness is a conscious effort to invest in understanding who the teacher is, who are her / his learners in a classroom, what are values, rules, attitudes that are applied at school as institution and the community. Developing self-awareness as a teacher leader strengthens not only individual performance of a teacher, but learning effectiveness and efficiency as well. The understanding, trustworthiness and wisdom that self-aware teachers leaders possess through co-creation-based teaching and learning equips them with variety skills for success in a classroom and beyond (Gallo, 2019).

Teacher's self-awareness refers to a teacher having a particular and specific picture of her / himself: being able to identify personal strengths and values in order to function as teacher leader in a classroom and beyond. Self-awareness brings an understanding of how the teacher's values, attitudes, perceptions, rules, emotions and experiences regulate her / his behavior, judgement and self-belief. This helps teachers evaluate how they are doing as leaders in a classroom and beyond, and which areas in teaching / learning they need to improve. Thus, the self-awareness is a value for teachers leaders (Wan Yaacob & Don, 2018).

The recognition of the self as a leader in a classroom for teacher means the process when s/he works with the self continuously by reflecting and recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses and use that knowledge to do what is best for their learners in a classroom through co-creation-based teaching / learning. Self-aware teachers leaders are capable manage their personal strengths and weaknesses to optimize their leadership impact into teaching and learning (Spezzano, 2018). Development of self-awareness the teacher achieves through continuous journey of seeking for new knowledge, implementing continuous improvements

in teaching by reflecting on learners' learning, and complementing the self by taking a honest and accurate assessment of one's own skills and talents, and using that knowledge to do what is best for learners in order to be effective teacher leader in a classroom.

Conclusions

Becoming a teacher is the continuous process, in which teacher finds the meaning through effective professional actions that are focused on the co-creation-based teacher-learner and teaching-learning relationships. Becoming a teacher means accepting the challenge of providing knowledge and guidance, and approaching a high level of ambivalence as it requires diligence from the teacher to carry out her / his professional responsibilities honestly and creatively. Becoming a teacher is a demanding professional demand and process as it about teaching, managing data, observing and studying different practices, improving teaching methodologies and making decisions for teaching in regard to sucessful learning of learners in a classroom.

Teachers are the role models and motivators for learners and the quality of their teaching has a great influence on learners' learning. But becoming a teacher does not mean that this process aims to become and / or to be a teacher leader in a classroom and beyond. Nevertheless that it is expected from every teacher to become and to be a leader at least in a classroom, but not every teacher is a leader, who is recognized by learners and the school community and the self. Teacher leadership and becoming a teacher both are continuous processes, which are interrelated in everyday professional performances: becoming a teacher requires continuous professional development and being a teacher leader requires being able to influence learners and their learning achievements. To be a teacher leader includes a combination of qualities and capabilities that are respected by learners and all school community. Then teachers can accomplish professional tasks because of the connection they have with their teaching profession and the learners, and school community they touch through it. Thus professionalism and particular capabilities that integrates personality and the profession are important components in becoming a teacher as well as recognizing the self as teacher leader in a classroom. Co-creation is inseparable part of both - becoming and being a teacher leader as it helps to create a good rapport with learners and support the effective teaching-learning relationships in a classroom.

Acknowledgement

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