

Invitation to Participate: Distinguishing Teacher Leadership Study

January 9, 2019

Dear ILASCD Member:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study intended to help others better understand how teachers distinguish teacher leadership from teacher professionalism.

Participation in the study involves completing a 12-item online survey that will take about 30 minutes. Once the survey is submitted, participation in the study is complete.

If you are a currently practicing teacher in Illinois and think you might be interested in participating, please read the Informed Consent Agreement below.

If you are not a currently practicing teacher in Illinois, please disregard this message.

Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Dr. Jana Hunzicker
Bradley University
jhunzicker@bradley.edu

Informed Consent Agreement

Participation in this study involves completing an online survey. The survey consists of 12 items, including nine multiple choice questions, two ranking/classification exercises, and an optional open-ended response item. Completion of the survey will take about 30 minutes. Once the survey is submitted, participation in the study is complete.

One advantage of participation is the opportunity to learn more about yourself as a teacher and as a teacher leader. However, participation is not required. If you choose not to participate, simply do nothing. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate.

Adverse reactions are not anticipated during this study. However, should you experience an adverse reaction or decide mid-survey not to continue, simply stop participating by not completing/submitting the survey. If you decide to complete and submit the survey, you will have an opportunity to express open-ended comments in response to the last survey question.

All information collected during this study will be anonymous, and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. All records of the data collected will be stored electronically in Qualtrics Survey Software and protected by the researcher's Qualtrics login and password. IP addresses will be deleted from Qualtrics immediately upon completion of data collection, the study's findings will be reported in aggregate (e.g., groups and percentages), and direct quotations will not include identifying information.

If you have questions about your rights as a human subject in research please contact the Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research (CUHSR), Bradley University's Institutional Review Board, at

309-677-3877. If you have questions about the study, you may contact the principal investigator or any of the co-investigators via Bradley e-mail.

No. I Will Not Participate in the Study.

If you have read the Informed Consent Agreement and do not wish to participate in the study, do not click on the survey link. Instead, simply delete this message.

Yes. I Will Participate in the Study.

If you have read the Informed Consent Agreement and wish to participate in the study, please click on the following link to complete the online survey. Clicking on the survey link and completing the survey anonymously documents your informed consent to participate. You may complete the survey one time only. Once you begin, you must complete the entire survey. The survey link will remain open through **February 1, 2019**.

If you choose yes, you are voluntarily making a decision to participate in the study. Your submission of the survey means that you have read and understand the information presented and have decided to participate. Your submission also means that all of your questions about the study have been answered to your satisfaction. If you think of any additional questions during or following your participation in the study, please contact the researcher.

http://bradley.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6zYV6lapg5AMIEx

Study Title: Distinguishing Teacher Leadership

Principal Investigator: Jana Hunzicker, Associate Professor, Bradley University

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to better understand how teachers distinguish teacher leadership from teacher professionalism. The study will address three research questions:

1. Which acts of teaching do teachers perceive as teacher leadership, and which do they perceive as teacher professionalism?
2. Which indicators of teacher leadership do teachers consider strong, and which do they consider weak?
3. Do teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership and teacher professionalism differ based on their personal characteristics and self-perceptions, their professional experiences and credentials, or where they teach?

Results of previous related research; Rationale for present study

Today's schools need teacher leaders. Yet varying notions of teacher leadership create ambiguity. For example, perceptions of teacher leadership may vary by educational setting (Parlar, Cansoy, & Kilinc, 2017). The online Glossary of Education Reform (2014) explains "...while the term teacher-leader is commonly used across the country, educators frequently create unique, homegrown vocabularies and titles when referring to these positions in their school" (para. 2). Without a clear definition of teacher leadership, teachers, administrators, and others may not recognize acts of teacher leadership when they occur. As a result, administrators are less likely to encourage and support developing teacher leaders, teachers themselves may not view themselves as leaders, and acts of teacher leadership remain random and unintentional, causing student learning and achievement to lose momentum.

One reason for the confusion is the conceptual overlap between the terms teacher leadership and teacher professionalism. For example, Rizvi and Elliot (2005) identified efficacy, practice, collaboration, and leadership as four dimensions of teacher professionalism. Grimsath, Nordvik, and Bergsvik (2008) named authority, leadership, and effective teaching as important aspects of teacher professionalism. Both studies represented teacher leadership as occurring within teacher professionalism. Coggins and McGovern (2014) explained, “The failure of teacher leadership to take hold has been a failure to define its purpose beyond the generic, albeit laudable, ideal of increased professionalism for teachers” (p. 16). An important first step toward a common definition of teacher leadership is asking teachers themselves.

The purpose of this survey-based study is to better understand how teachers themselves distinguish teacher leadership from teacher professionalism, or minimum expectations for all teachers. This study is modified and expanded from a pilot study titled “Teacher Leadership and Professionalism” that was conducted by the researcher during spring 2016 in one Central Illinois school district.

Findings from the pilot study, currently in press (Hunzicker, in press), revealed that practicing teachers considered 12 of 20 acts of teaching to be acts of teacher leadership. Moreover, teachers in the pilot study identified credibility and expertise as the strongest indicators of teacher leadership. While these findings are interesting, the pilot study had three major limitations: 1) The findings drew from a small sample size; 2) the sample was limited to one school district; and 3) an either/or classification scheme was used. The limitations section of the pilot study’s article concludes, “Specifically, revision of the survey to allow for a wider range of responses and replication of the revised survey on a larger scale and across diverse samples are necessary to substantiate, refute, and/or extend the findings reported here” (Hunzicker, in press, p. ?).

To address these limitations, this study will represent teachers from throughout the state of Illinois. Moreover, the either/or classification scheme for distinguishing acts of teacher leadership from acts of teacher professionalism has been modified to a Likert scale that ranges from 1 (more of an act of teacher leadership) to 6 (more of an act of teacher professionalism).

Subject selection and inclusion / exclusion criteria

All current members of the Illinois Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ILASCD) who are practicing teachers (approximately 800 teachers) will receive an e-mail invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix A). After completing the informed consent process, if they choose to participate, the first nine survey questions ask respondents to provide information about themselves and where they teach. If any of these responses indicate that a respondent is not a currently practicing teacher in the state of Illinois, all of their survey responses will be excluded from inclusion in the study.

Provision for managing adverse reactions

Teachers who choose to participate in the study will complete the survey online in a location and at a time that is most comfortable for them. Should a teacher experience an adverse reaction or decide in the middle of the survey not to continue, he or she may simply stop participating by not completing/submitting the survey. Participants who decide to complete and submit the survey will have an opportunity to express open-ended comments in response to the last survey question.

The circumstances surrounding consent procedure

An informational e-mail invitation to participate in the study will be extended to all current members of the Illinois Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ILASCD) who are practicing teachers. The e-mail message will include the informed consent agreement and a link to the survey. The informed consent agreement will clearly state that clicking on the survey link and completing the survey implies that informed consent has been granted. Once respondents click on the survey link, they will be reminded again in the opening sentence that they have given informed consent.

Provision for protection of privacy – explain how confidentiality will be maintained

Because online surveys are self-administered (Dillman, 2007; Fowler, 2013) via an anonymous survey

link (Qualtrics, 2018), the researcher will not know the identity of the survey respondents. To further protect respondents' identities, the following actions will be taken: 1) The e-mail invitation to participate in the study will be disseminated by a third party through the Illinois Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ILASCD) list serv, 2) no personally identifying information will be solicited through the survey, and 3) IP addresses will be deleted from Qualtrics immediately upon completion of data collection.

Attachments

- Appendix A: E-mail Invitation to Participate and Informed Consent Agreement
- Appendix B: Distinguishing Teacher Leadership Survey

References

- Coggins, C., & McGovern, K. (2014). Five goals for teacher leadership. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 95(7), 15-21.
- Dillman, D. A. (2007). *Mail and internet surveys: A tailored design method* (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Fowler, F. J. (2013). *Survey research methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Glossary of Education Reform. (2014). *Teacher-leader*. Retrieved from <http://edglossary.org/teacher-leader/>
- Grimsath, G., Nordvik, G., & Bergsvik, E. (2008). The newly qualified teacher: A leader and a professional? A Norwegian Study. *Journal of In-service Education*, 34(2), 219-236.
- Hunzicker, J. L. (in press). Teacher leadership or teacher professionalism? What Practicing Teachers Think. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*.
- Parlar, H., Cansoy, R., & Kilinc, A. C. (2017). Examining the relationship between teacher leadership culture and teacher professionalism: Quantitative study. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 5(8), 13-25.
- Qualtrics (2018). About us. Retrieved from <http://www.qualtrics.com/about/>
- Rizvi, M., & Elliot, B. (2005). Teachers' perceptions of their professionalism in government primary schools in Karachi, Pakistan. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 33(1), 35-52.