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# *Foreword to the Second Edition*

## *Bringing Teacher Leadership Back In*

More than two decades ago, after increasing exasperation with the assault that British Thatcherism was making upon all the professions, but most of all on those that involved education, I applied for a job in Canada at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The job was in a regional field center, assisting improvement and innovation efforts in local schools. Some months later, I received a telephone call inviting me to an interview for a completely different job in the same institution—to be an associate professor in educational administration. It was a flattering approach, but I had to admit the truth. “I haven’t actually applied for a job in educational administration,” I said. “We know you haven’t,” came the reply. “But I don’t actually know anything about educational administration,” I confessed. “No, we know you don’t,” they reassured me.

Months and even years later, I slowly unpacked the truth behind this mystery. One member of the search committee for the educational administration position was also on the search committee for the field center job. I had been poached! More than this, after an external review, the department had been told it must appoint an international scholar with qualifications in a discipline outside educational administration (mine was sociology) but who had interests and expertise that were compatible with the field. The last piece to fit in place explaining the almost unanimous support for my appointment was that I had a field of interest completely different from and therefore not competing with any other member of the

department—teachers. My colleagues were safe. In the field of educational administration someone who studied teachers would pose no challenge to them whatsoever!

Even as late as the 1980s, the field of educational administration that would in many places later evolve into educational leadership had little or no place for research on teachers and teaching—except where teachers got in the way of administrators' plans. Courses in collective bargaining and in principal supervision and evaluation of teachers were enough to deal with those eventualities. Apart from some academically internal and largely esoteric debates within the field about abstract theoretical directions, leadership was mainly something practiced either heroically or managerially by big men in big suits. Teachers were not the leaders, but the led.

With a doctorate and a book on cultures of middle school teaching in England behind me (Hargreaves, 1986), I came upon an intriguing opportunity for a new study. Elementary teachers in Ontario had gained legislated increases in preparation time. Would they use it to perpetuate a long-standing culture of alleged individualism of teaching in and preparing for their own classes or would they use the time to work together and overcome the barrier of time that many had said impeded their efforts to collaborate in the past? From England especially, there was a growing literature pointing to exemplary instances of collaboration in English primary schools, with primary teachers also taking on roles of subject leaders and advisors for their colleagues within the school. And in Ontario, I was able to construct a natural experiment by studying the use of newly provided preparation time in two large school districts—one with an explicit focus on collaboration, one without. After decades of classic critiques that teaching was diminished and made conservative by being performed in a culture of isolation and individualism, I found myself part of an emerging field of work that did not merely complain about how most teachers failed to work together, but that began to document the examples of collaborative professional practice that already existed.

The most interesting critical findings of the preparation time study came not from the district that had no focus on collaboration, but from the one that did. Under confident, outstanding yet strangely low-key principals, some schools were able to energize the collective leadership of their teachers as they collaborated together to make improvements that benefited their students. They were able to develop what I called strong cultures of collaboration. But other principals tried to drive collaboration through their staffs, telling them where and when to meet, with whom and for what purpose. In this context of what I called forced collaboration or contrived collegiality, many teachers actually started to collaborate less (Hargreaves, 1994). Although I did not use the language of teacher leadership at the time, principals in the first schools were able to acknowledge and advance the power of teacher leadership, while those who were less comfortable in their own skin were either unaware or afraid of it.

Building on this work, my new Canadian colleague, Michael Fullan, and I linked the findings on teacher collaboration to his foundational work on educational change. We developed a series of short texts addressed to the teaching profession and accompanied this with a demanding worldwide program of intensive systemwide training to build teachers' capacities and skills in collaboration for school improvement, and to develop principals' skills and capacities so they could foster stronger collaborative cultures while avoiding contrived collegiality (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998). In many ways, this effort to reculture schools and systems on more collaborative lines formed the precursor to contemporary emphases on creating professional learning communities. Again, although we did not pose it in these words, we were trying to grow more teacher leadership across schools and systems.

Then came the standards movement. In the early stages, the idea of high standards, broadly defined, was a spur to stronger and more focused teacher collaboration. With my co-founder of the International Centre for Educational Change, Lorna Earl, I set about examining how reputationally successful junior high school teachers made sense of a curriculum reform effort to develop a more rigorous and relevant interdisciplinary curriculum for young adolescents through a small number of common learning outcomes, linked to alternative forms of assessment (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001). Left to their own devices, even the best teachers struggled to interpret outcomes that seemed either too specific or too vague, they found it difficult to map the curriculum backwards from the outcomes to their teaching, and they became frustrated with formatively assessed interdisciplinary outcomes that seemed to be in conflict with summatively described subject-based report cards. However, when teachers worked together under the quiet yet firmly facilitative leadership of principals who understood teaching and learning, and when they had access to the outside expertise of process consultants who supported their planning efforts, they collaborated magnificently to team teach classes together, looping with them from one year to the next; or to mount inventors' festivals to showcase students' interdisciplinary achievements to corporate judges; or to create three-way parent interviews where parents, teachers, and students met to discuss students' work portfolios together. Supported by high quality principalship, teachers demonstrated once more how, given the chance, they were able to succeed and also to lead.

Then standards turned into standardization. Reformers tried to bypass the principal and the teacher and take their highly prescribed changes straight into the classroom. They loaded up curriculum content in narrowly defined basics linked to high stakes tests, and took away time and resources for teachers to think through the implementation. Apart from a very few teachers who took on roles as centralized curriculum writers, implementation experts or coaches who enforced fidelity and compliance, professional collaboration went underground and teacher leadership went

into reverse. Research funded by the Spencer Foundation and conducted with my colleagues Ivor Goodson, Dean Fink, and others revealed how the age of standardization reduced the amount and quality of professional collaboration and formalized what was left into hurried meetings dedicated to implementing unwanted government priorities—contrived collegiality on a massive scale (Hargreaves, 2003). Overwhelmed and insecure, teachers either abandoned their leadership and retreated into their classrooms, or invested their leadership in union activism to oppose the reforms that inflicted harm on their students and themselves.

The purpose of the Spencer-funded study was not just to examine the impact on teachers of contemporary reforms, but to see how teachers in eight secondary schools had experienced and responded to change over more than thirty years. Four of the selected schools were traditional and four were innovative. Interestingly, the archaeology of change in the innovative schools unearthed decades of evidence of extraordinary teacher leadership that far preceded modern discussions of the subject (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Frustrated teachers in one inner city created a school without walls in the 1970s to respond to the diverse needs of students unable to succeed in conventional high school settings. Assertive women in another high school, at a time when even pant suits were regarded as a sign of dangerous rebellion, formed a women's group in the school that secured gender neutral language and curriculum across the district, and a mentoring program for young women teachers. Decades later, these young women leaders would become some of the most prominent leaders of not only their district but of the entire province. Outstanding teacher leadership today creates outstanding school and system leadership for the future. And such leadership has been in existence for at least four decades.

Two of these innovative schools became fully fledged professional learning organizations or learning communities. While elsewhere, so-called professional learning communities and the teachers who lead within them have degenerated into stilted teams of teachers thrown together after school to examine numerical data and generate short-term solutions that boost student achievement in tested subjects, these schools were living and lively communities where teachers were committed to deep learning not just tested achievement, where they collaborated informally as well as formally, and where they cared about their students' and each others' lives as people as well as the formalities of their work and performance (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). Teacher leadership, we learned, is powerful when it is grounded in cultures of trust and responsibility around genuinely shared goals for improved student learning, but it is often corrupted and contorted when it becomes colonized by external agents who want to use it merely to deliver government or system targets in narrowly conceived objectives (Hargreaves, 2008).

An especially instructive case that highlights this contrast is that of Finland—the highest performer in the world on OECD PISA tests, as well as being the country with the narrowest achievement gaps. In 2007, I took

a team to Finland for OECD to examine the relationship between leadership and school improvement (Hargreaves, Halász, & Pont, 2007). In Finland, within broad steering guidelines of the state, teachers create curriculum together in each municipality. Within their schools, they feel responsible for all the children in the school, not just in their own class, grade, or subject. Trust, cooperation, and responsibility are at the heart of Finnish teachers' culture. And if the principal should become ill, indisposed, or ineffective, then teachers say that they simply take over the school because the school does not belong to the principal—it belongs to all of them. In Finland, teacher leadership is not a plan, a career structure, or a set of tasks, but a defining feature of how the entire national system operates. In Finland, teachers are able and expected to lead because there are things of substance worth leading.

Most recently, my Boston College colleague, Dennis Shirley, and I have investigated the power of teacher leadership and collaboration across schools, identifying how the majority of schools in a network of underperforming schools can significantly lift student achievement by sharing ideas and practices with each other and also connecting with higher performing mentors. These practices of teachers helping teachers and schools supporting schools demonstrate the power of networked teacher leadership to yield significant and more sustainable results than implementation of imposed, standardized practices (Hargreaves & Shirley, in press).

From this body of work on teachers and teaching over 30 years, it is evident that there is a long and distinguished though often understated and even unsung tradition of teacher leadership in our schools. All teachers in schools know who their leaders are—the ones who teach well, work hard, are prepared to stand up for what they believe, are able to work with and command respect among diverse colleagues, and are in it for the children rather than for themselves. Teacher leadership often paradoxically requires confident but low-key principalship in order to prosper, but in some systems like Finland it is a defining feature of how the system operates. Teacher leadership thrives in innovative environments and is driven underground by standardized ones, where it may resurface to turn against the system itself, in defense of teachers' dignity and of the students they serve. Teachers can and do lead across schools as well as within them, raising the performance of their own institutions as they do so. In recent years, however, teacher leadership has sometimes become so formalized and data-driven that long-term reflection and deep conversation have been replaced by the pressure to meet short-term targets in hurried meetings. In its deeper and most authentic sense, it is time to bring teacher leadership back in as a collective collegial effort through conversation, inquiry, and action to transform curriculum and pedagogy together so that all students' needs can be served effectively.

*Developing Teacher Leaders* by Frank Crowther, Margaret Ferguson, and Leonne Hann brings teacher leadership back in with a vengeance. After years of soulless standardization and sometimes in direct defiance of it, a

very small club of outstanding scholars committed to teacher professionalism has asserted the importance of teacher leadership for educational change, and also exemplified it in practice. These writers, in this important second edition, are, with Alma Harris in Britain and Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller as well as Joe Murphy in the United States, in the very forefront of advocacy for and analysis of teacher leadership.

Conceptually and strategically, in this much developed second edition, Crowther and colleagues demonstrate the importance of teacher leadership in developing a mission and a vision without being exclusionary of the purposes of others; they emphasize how teacher leadership is a vital part of community and culture building in schools; they stress how credible teacher leadership is not merely vague talk about missions and plans but also grounded in and insistent upon pedagogical excellence; they indicate how effective teacher leadership turns ideas into action and overcomes barriers by turning obstacles into opportunities; and they show that the best teacher leadership is asset-based rather than deficit-driven—building on existing records and early indications of achievement and success.

Teacher leadership, this book acknowledges, is not always good leadership and it can take many different forms. The links to pedagogy, community-building, an action-orientation and a problem-solving mentality are more likely, they argue, under strong and supportive principals. In Anglo-Saxon contexts at least, teacher leadership, like distributed leadership, does not mean weaker leadership for principals but principals who have strong leadership capacities of their own—a clear sense of direction and an ability to lead with and through rather than over others in pursuit of these purposes. Strong principals in cultures of teacher leadership know when to challenge and to push and also when to step back. These are some of the essential lessons of this leading text in the field of teacher leadership.

*Developing Teacher Leaders*, though, is not just a book based in theory or a few opportunistic examples from practice. Rather, it arises out of collaborative improvement work between universities and schools in places where teacher leadership has been central. Most important of all, perhaps, is the broad-based IDEAS improvement network established by the authors after their first edition where schools network with each other and, with outside assistance, come together to develop a pedagogical focus and build communities of inquiry and improvement around it. From personal experience, I can vouch that this is the liveliest and most challenging of networks where teachers push and support each other across schools in the non-sanctimonious, fun-filled way that only teachers can, to make real changes that benefit all their students, especially those who are most at risk. Endless examples of exemplary practice from this improvement work, most often written by teacher leaders themselves, demonstrate what teacher leadership looks like in the busy world of practice as well as the elegant formulae of theory.

Last of all, unlike the other leading texts on this topic, Crowther, Ferguson, and Hann set out a collection of activities or CLASSES for readers

who want to develop and deepen their own teacher leadership. This book is theoretical and practical, inspiring and informative, constructive yet also critical. Australia and New Zealand have been at the very leading edge of some of the world's most effective initiatives in education—literacy practices and Reading Recovery being among the best known. *Developing Teacher Leaders* adds to this impressive lineage, giving to the world a vision, a set of values, and vivid examples in practice of how and why more and better teacher leadership can and should lead to more and better improvement for all the students that we serve. It brings teacher leadership out of the marginal shadows of educational administration and into the forefront of successful educational change.

—Andy Hargreaves

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