Why Do We Need Widely Distributed Leadership?

We now understand that instructional leadership in effective schools “will be broadened and viewed as a dispersed concept that includes teachers. This is in keeping with the teacher empowerment concept; it recognizes that a principal cannot be the only leader in a complex organization like a school. With the democratization of organizations, especially schools, the leadership function becomes one of creating a community of shared values” (Lezotte, 1991).

“[Principals of the most effective schools] were at the center rather than at the top of their school’s organization. To facilitate consensus building and collective effort, they shared power. . . . Their actions encouraged teacher leadership and. . . nurtured decision making by teachers.” (Newmann & Associates, 1996, pp. 292, 258)

“Rather than focusing on the character traits and actions of individual leaders—in the heroic American tradition of charismatic leadership—we will increasingly have to focus on the distribution of leadership.” (Elmore, 2006, p. 42)

“It is only through participatory leadership that one is likely to create the level and type of commitments necessary to sustain disruptive innovations.” (Schlechty, 2005, pp. 12–13)

“Strong learning communities develop when principals learn to relinquish a measure of control and help others participate in building leadership throughout the school.” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006, p. 81)

Shared leadership is based on the concept of the school as a community of learners and recognition of the fact that the principal can’t do it alone (Hallinger, 2007).