

Studies in Educational Leadership 25

Charles F. Webber *Editor*

Teacher Leadership in International Contexts

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Volume 25

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Charles F. Webber
Editor

Teacher Leadership in International Contexts

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Preface

The *International Study of Teacher Leadership* (www.mru.ca/istl) began in 2018 at an invitational international research conference hosted by Dr. Wenji Fan and his colleagues in the Faculty of Education at Guangxi Normal University in Guilin, China. During the conference, several colleagues who had been co-researchers on previous international studies spent time discussing their mutual interest in the construct of teacher leadership. The colleagues agreed to form a core research team and, by the end of the conference, the team had formulated research questions and planned a six-stage study.

Over the next 4 years, the research team expanded its membership until it included representatives from Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more recently Morocco and Argentina. The co-researchers began their studies in their respective countries, maintaining their focus through ongoing synchronous videoconferences.

Early-stage ISTL reports were shared at a 2019 conference in Çesme, Turkey, hosted by Kadir Beycioglu, Ali Çağatay Kılınc, Serap Emil, Ahmet Su, and their colleagues with the Turkish Educational Administration Research and Development Association. Professor Beycioglu was one of the original research team members who gathered in Guilin in 2018. He had collaborated previously with several ISTL members on the *International Study of Principal Preparation*. Professor Beycioglu, in his role as Founding Editor of *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership*, also included a special journal issue, co-edited by Janet Mola Okoko, that featured the work of ISTL team members.

Although COVID-19 global pandemic restrictions made some parts of the research impossible from early 2020 until early 2022, the research team was able to adapt by using technology to conduct online interviews, observe online teacher meetings and professional development activities, and administer questionnaires. Our findings were shared during virtual conferences and seminars, due to the initiative of ISTL members such as Edith Cisneros-Cohernour, Pedro José Canto Herrera, and Gabriela Achach Sonda in Mexico; and by Jan Khumalo, Molly Fuller, Corné van der Vyver, and Jan Heystek in South Africa. As global health restrictions gradually eased in 2022, other study stages became possible, such as case studies,

face-to-face interviews, and oral histories. We have returned to presenting our work at in-person conferences and publishing in academic journals.

In the meantime, this book shares some of what the ISTL team learned from its work that was conducted during difficult worldwide challenges. The book's appearance is testimony to the diligence of the ISTL research team, but it is important to note that Kadir Beycioglu was a major force behind our collective desire to produce this book. He planned to serve as co-editor and he began the initial exploration of publication possibilities. Then, Kadir and his family suffered two major blows. Tragically, they lost their young son in a traffic accident and Kadir was diagnosed with a severe illness. His declining health caused him to be unable to begin the editing work that he was passionate about doing. He continued to stay in touch with all of us about the book and to offer encouragement right until he passed away in August 2021. Our international studies of teacher leadership would look very different without the vision and contributions of Professor Beycioglu.

Our ongoing international studies of teacher leadership are possible because of Wenji Fan's vision at the forefront of our planning, the impetus of Kadir Beycioglu, and the tireless research, analyses, and writing of all ISTL members. As with most well-functioning research teams, the ISTL is a collection of excellent scholars who also are friends.

In summary, this book articulates how the research team and study participants conceptualize teacher leadership and how they perceive it is manifested, or not, in Western and non-Western schools and educational systems. The chapter authors also share how the values, beliefs, and assumptions underpinning teacher leadership are reflective of culture and context. Part I describes who is interested in teacher leadership and why it has emerged as a relatively undefined yet influential factor in educational discourses in many nations. This section also describes how the purpose of the ISTL, and this book, is to contribute to the wider understanding of teacher leadership and of how professional developers might contribute to teacher leadership knowledge and skill development. Part II of the book highlights how important it is to contextualize descriptions of teacher leadership and the roles of teacher leaders. Factors such as social context, political frameworks, postcolonialism, and economic well-being determine the degree to which teacher leadership can be a consideration in educational governance, policy making, and leadership development. In Part III, readers are challenged to consider how traditional expectations for educators and the politics of leading may contribute to organizational homeostasis that frequently supports the status quo in education systems. This section of the book also describes schools and school systems as ecosystems in which some teachers and principals stand out because of their profiles as credible and trustworthy individuals. Such teacher leaders influence their communities more than most because of their self-awareness, altruism, and interpersonal acumen.

More to come.

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Part I
Exploring Teacher Leadership

Chapter 1

Who Is Interested in Teacher Leadership and Why?



Charles F. Webber , Clelia Pineda-Báez , Gloria Gratacós ,
Nicholas Wachira, and Jodi Nickel 

Abstract This chapter addresses some of the significant gaps in knowledge about teacher leadership. First, the authors describe important attributes of teacher leaders and their motivations for exercising influence. The spheres of teacher leader influence and responsibilities are described, progressing from the need for individual self-reflection to the classroom and throughout the school. The widest level of influence is on parents and the larger community. Further, the lens of teacher identity is used to examine the process by which teachers become leaders, along with the influence of beliefs, values, and a sense of agency.

Next, the chapter will consider some of the influential voices and influences on teacher leadership dialogue. It describes how the term teacher leadership obscures nuances relevant to different international contexts. The argument is presented that there is an unintended but clearly discernible hegemonic dimension to our understanding of teacher leadership. This will describe the terms in relation to implicit

This report is based on research done as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. The multi-stage study commenced in 2018. For more information, see the study website: www.mru.ca/istl.

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assumptions which may be competing and are perhaps primarily based in Western thought.

The chapter emphasizes the need for more context-centered interrogation of the discourse about teacher leadership, especially in relation to its cultural compatibility and sensitivity. Cultural, historical, economic, and political differences require understanding teacher leadership in global and local contexts. The chapter closes by briefly describing each of the chapters in the book and how they will address gaps in current understandings of teacher leadership.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Cultural context · Teacher identity · Shared leadership

Introduction

Teacher leadership is an educational term used widely in Western nations and often in other international settings. It is inherently an attractive term because it implies shared commitment to professional collaboration and to meeting the needs of learners. Policy documents and professional development initiatives worldwide frequently reflect the assumption that teacher leadership is well understood. However, examination of educational policies and practices suggests that teacher leadership is not clearly defined nor is there a shared understanding in educational communities of how teacher leadership might be used or even if it should be used to improve teaching and learning. Further, Leithwood (2007) characterized teacher leadership as a movement rather than evidence-based practice. He suggested that the teacher leadership literature describes teacher leaders participating in duties that would be considered in most professions as normal responsibilities rather than leadership per se.

Teacher leadership may not be defined with clarity in the literature, but Nguyen et al. (2020, p. 67) provided a useful overview of “four common hallmarks of teacher leadership.” They include teacher leaders as influencers, professional practices based on collaboration and trust, leadership within classrooms and throughout school communities, and a focus on teaching, learning, and school effectiveness. Although not a definition per se, the four hallmarks provide a viable framework for discussing teacher leadership.

This chapter will draw upon the hallmarks provided by Nguyen et al. (2020) to discuss the spheres of influences for teacher leaders and how teacher identity shapes teacher leaders’ influence within their schools and communities. This is followed by consideration of some of the influences on teacher leadership dialogue, how it may be dominated by Western thought, and argues that teacher leadership may require greater sensitivity to the local and global contexts that inform teacher leadership work. The chapter will close by explaining the information gaps this book seeks to address and by describing how the book chapters are intended to inform readers about how the construct of teacher leadership is understood in a wide range of sociocultural contexts (see Fig. 1.1).

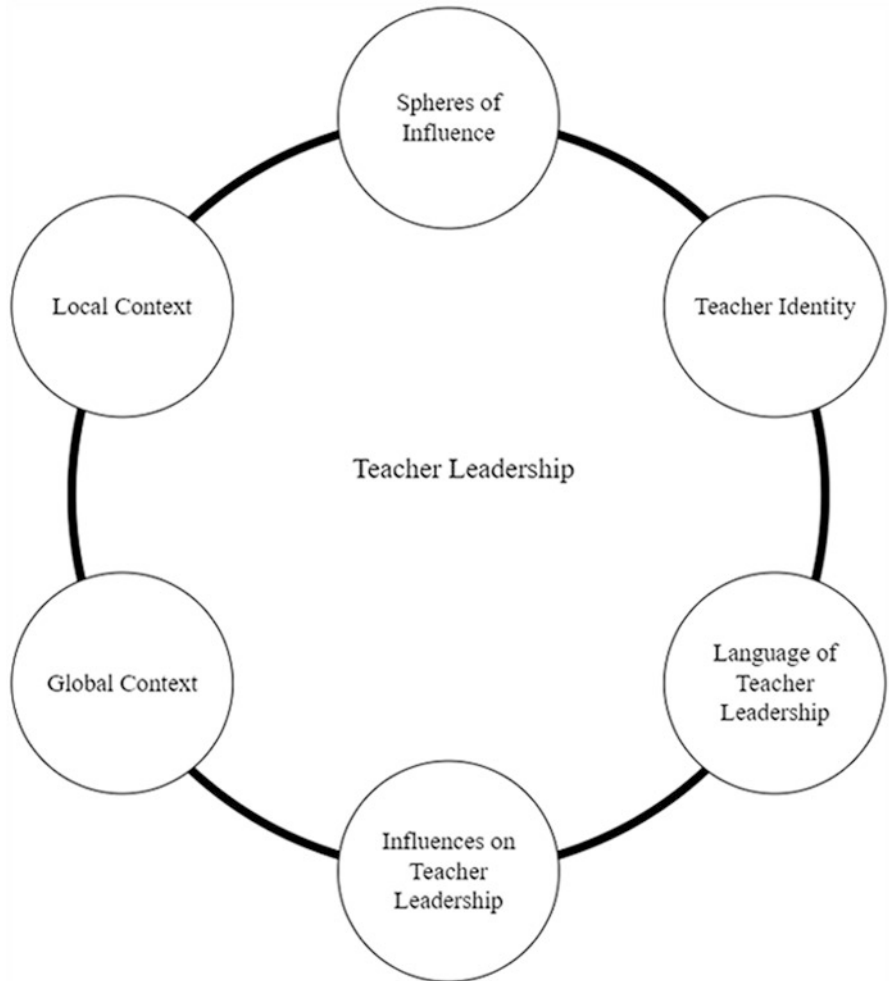


Fig. 1.1 Lens for viewing teacher leadership

Rationale for Studying Teacher Leadership

The significance of teachers in meeting the needs of complex learners has long been understood. For example, Hattie (2012), Leithwood et al. (2004), and Stronge (2010) all noted that teachers are the single most important factor in student success. Because of this, the roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders are of great interest to all school community members with a stake in instructional improvement and student achievement.

For instance, as expectations have increased around the world for greater teacher accountability and increased student achievement, it is more crucial than ever that

teacher leaders facilitate school effectiveness and school improvement (Shen et al., 2020). They serve as classroom-based experts who also may be transformational leaders who wield influence with all school community partners: “administrators, policy makers, parents, and community leaders” (Berry, 2015, p. 147). They also act as change agents (Crowther et al., 2008) who facilitate school-wide instructional improvement and student achievement (Bond, 2011).

Whether teacher leaders exercise influence in formal or informal roles is discussed in detail in the literature (see Campbell et al., 2015; Crowther, 2011). However, Poekert et al. (2016) suggested that the distinction between formal and informal leadership roles is less important than the credibility of teacher leaders with other school community members. According to Poekert et al. (2016) credibility is enhanced when professional trust is established, and strong relationships are maintained with peers and school administrators. As Crowther et al. (2008) noted, teacher leaders often have strong personalities but Bond (2011) emphasized that they also must have high levels of awareness of self, others, school culture, and effective teaching.

Baum and Krulwich (2016) cautioned that it can be difficult to hire individuals with teacher leader expertise. Therefore, they advised administrators and teacher colleagues to strive to identify “high-potential teachers” (p. 64) who demonstrate understanding of both child and adult development early in their careers and then to mentor them and to invite them to engage in leadership development activities. Early identification and mentoring can enhance what Zepeda et al. (2013) described as teacher leader acumen.

Crowther et al. (2008) cautioned that teacher leadership must be voluntary. So why do teacher leaders strive to serve their communities? Bond (2011) suggested that teacher leaders simply care deeply about their students and their schools. Zepeda et al. (2013) concurred and described the strong commitment and sense of professionalism exhibited by teacher leaders. Another motivation for teacher leaders may be that they find their service a professionally exhilarating experience (Crowther et al., 2008).

However, teacher leaders also may be motivated by their need for professional self-care. That is, they may wish to avoid professional isolation (Bond, 2011) and to ameliorate stagnation (Zepeda et al., 2013). Teacher leaders may see engagement with school improvement initiatives as professional growth which leads to changes in how they perceive themselves (Poekert et al., 2016). In turn, successful teacher leadership experiences can enhance interest in advancing to more formal leadership positions (Zepeda et al., 2013). Bond (2011) even encouraged teacher educators to prepare teacher candidates for teacher leadership during pre-service degree programs.

Teachers are central to the achievement of educational goals. Poekert (2012) described the movement within the United States to create teacher leadership positions as part of school reform initiatives. The intent of mandating the appointment of teacher leaders is to promote professional development within schools and to establish communities of practice. That is, the goal is to use teacher leadership to promote school improvement. Frost (2010) wrote that teacher leadership is a

construct that can be used as the basis for innovation in education. Moreover, facilitating positive teacher engagement in decision making with their colleagues, students, and parents has the potential to increase job satisfaction significantly (Nyamubi, 2017).

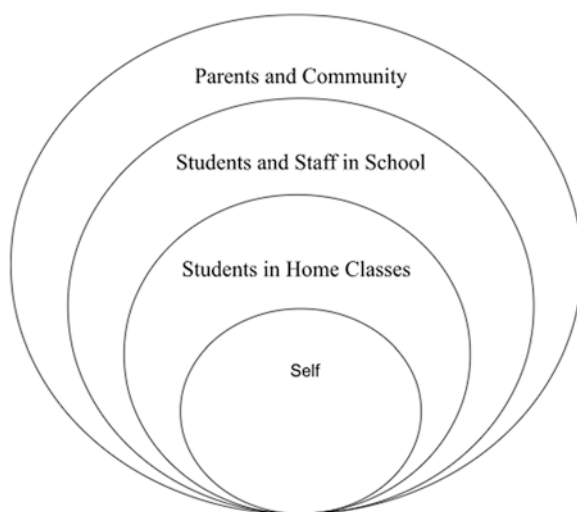
Spheres of Influence

If teacher leaders are classroom-based while also being perceived as influencing practices and policies in their school communities then Fig. 1.2 depicts their spheres of influence and responsibility.

First, in their pursuit of professional growth, it is important that teacher leaders engage in critical reflection of their professional practices and challenge the assumptions and beliefs that they and colleagues may hold (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). Engaging in introspection occurs for teachers at all career stages through interactions with the people and events within their environments (Bandura, 1995). Ideally, professional learning for early-career teachers is facilitated by mentors who provide observation, performance feedback, and follow-up support (Vygotsky, 1978). As their self-understanding and self-efficacy evolves, teacher leaders develop their ability to predict the outcomes of their work with their students (Bandura, 1995).

Second, as teacher leaders engage in transformative learning about themselves as professionals (Mezirow, 1991), they embrace the complexities of facilitating learning among the students in their classrooms. Teacher leaders exhibit high levels of self-efficacy in terms of their capacity to improve student learning (Eun, 2019). Self-efficacy may emerge from professional development that mobilizes teachers' capacity to lead innovation in classroom teaching that improves the learning of

Fig. 1.2 Spheres of teacher leader influence and responsibilities



students (Eun, 2019; Frost, 2012). We know that teachers from most cultures enter their profession because they seek to contribute to society by facilitating learning by young people (Butler, 2017). However, they must master the challenging conditions associated with optimizing student learning. The conditions include classroom management that focuses and paces learning, provision of criteria for success and examples of student work that meets the criteria, establishing advance organizers, and using problem-based learning (Hattie & Zierer, 2017). The influence of teachers on their students' learning is predicated upon strong teacher subject matter knowledge. That is, teachers who become leaders in their school communities know and understand what they teach while establishing powerful relationships with their students that allow them to learn in a context of safety and trust. Another major factor for teacher leader success in their own classrooms is their passion for what they teach, who they teach, and their profession (Hattie & Zierer, 2019).

Third, teacher leaders feel obliged to serve the interests of students and colleagues throughout their schools (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). They model professional commitment, they share ideas and resources with colleagues throughout their schools, and they coach and collaborate with colleagues in the use of new curricula and materials. Teacher leaders' visibility in their school communities causes others to identify them as leaders because of their willingness to learn, risk, and advocate (Gonzales & Lambert, 2001). Sinha and Hanuscin (2017) suggested that teachers expand their perceptions of themselves as teacher leaders as they gain experience as influencers in their school communities.

The fourth sphere of influence and responsibility for teacher leaders is with parents and the larger community. Zepeda et al. (2013) posited that "Perhaps the most important relationship that a school can forge is with parents" (p. 44). They noted that having parents as allies supports student learning, develops joint problem-solving capacity, and informs decisions about learners. Berry et al. (2010) highlighted the central role of establishing trust with parents in fostering student achievement. Frost (2011) also emphasized the importance of parents' voices in creating an environment of inclusion of ethnic minority learners in schools. In stark contrast, Ottmann (2009) highlighted the ongoing trauma experienced in Indigenous communities in Canada because of the odious history of the removal of children from parents and their placement in residential schools which clearly operated in direct contravention to the goal of fostering collaborative parent-teacher relationships.

Teacher Identity

Teacher identity is an important lens to understand the process of becoming a teacher leader because it involves teachers' personal and professional experiences, as well as their interactions with all members of their communities (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017). Further, this iterative process is also strongly influenced by context (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Wilkins, 2020) in which social expectations of teachers' roles (Osmond-Johnson, 2019), plus the social image and the prestige

associated with the teaching profession in each culture play an important role (Marcelo & Vaillant, 2009). Thus, the understanding of teacher leadership is a social construct informed by societal perceptions and cultural and organizational characteristics of the school (Coronel, 2005).

Definitions of teacher identity typically include teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, collegial and pedagogical relationships, and approaches for negotiating external expectations (Anspal et al., 2019; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Hong, 2010; Izadinia, 2013). Teacher identity often results from teachers' increased confidence that is derived from peers' acknowledgment of their capabilities and from their feedback (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017). Hence, teacher identity is related to not only with how teachers perceive themselves, but also with how others perceive them in their profession (Gee, 2000; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018; Vähäsantanen, 2015). The more a teacher leader identifies with the profession of teaching, the more their behaviors will be consistent with professional norms and values (Lamote & Engels, 2010; Passmore & Prescott, 2020).

Teacher leaders construct their leadership beliefs and values "from their deeply held assumptions, their prior experiences, and their current engagement with compelling issues and collegial interactions" (Gonzales & Lambert, 2001, p. 9). At the core of those beliefs is the profound conviction that teaching transforms lives and that it cannot be reduced to a set of competencies (Bernal et al., 2013). Teacher leaders possess strong moral and ethical commitments to make a difference in students' lives (Pennac, 2008) and to advocate for issues of social justice. Bernal and Ibarrola (2015) stated that teacher leaders seek professional development opportunities to enrich their pedagogical repertoire to boost students' potential. They added that clarity about their mission helps teacher leaders to interpret "social expectations and demands of their teaching activity" (p. 67).

Teacher leaders have a strong sense of mission that enables them to become involved in institutional matters and to promote a collaborative culture. Visone (2020) observed that teacher leaders' agency allowed them to "move collective pedagogy forward" (p. 17). According to Buchanan (2015), professional agency and professional identity are intertwined and continuously developed. Teacher leaders align their actions with their professional identities and the school's professional environment.

There are additional forces that motivate teacher leaders. Margolis and Deuel (2009) described intrinsic motivations, such as the desire to transform professional practices and extrinsic motivations like financial rewards, peer recognition, or career advancement. Identity may vary depending upon teachers' career stages. Teachers in the early stages of their careers may become leaders because they begin valuing learning with adults, which leads them to join or create teams to advance collective endeavors (Margolis & Deuel, 2009). As teachers progress in their teaching careers, they find dynamic and productive ways to influence members of their communities (Aderet-German et al., 2019). Teacher identity is also adaptive and is influenced by teachers' capacity to learn, their maturity, and their feeling of safety. Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) indicated that teacher leadership is an "interactive and ongoing process" (p. 81) that changes, as do the individuals who are part of that process.

Teachers who assume roles as leaders may also manifest multiple identities depending on their circumstances and the people with whom they interact: students, peers, administrative staff, principals, and others external to the school. Day (2018) stated that teachers' professional identity involves emotional control that helps them to "navigate the complex, sometimes conflictual, worlds of classroom and staff-room, learning and teaching, and external expectations and demands" (p. 64). Iranzo-García et al. (2020) added that leadership necessitates solid communication skills and personal traits such as empathy and assertiveness.

In the Taiwanese context, Chien (2018) observed that teacher leaders perceive themselves as focusing on modeling instructional innovations and collaborating with colleagues rather than seeking formal positional appointments. However, teacher identity may evolve as teachers progress through the career stages that Steffy and Wolfe (2001) identified, i.e., novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and emeritus phases. Within each career stage teacher identity differs, potentially due to how they position themselves within their school communities, and their self-images (Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017).

Bandura (1995) observed that teacher-leaders' levels of self-efficacy fluctuate because of their successes as leaders and advocates. High levels of self-efficacy may lead to success but also can lead to teacher leaders sometimes being the recipients of "derision, condemnation and persecution, even though societies eventually benefit from their persevering efforts" (Bandura, 1995, p. 1). Bezzina and Bufalino (2019) also cautioned that working as a teacher leader within a hierarchical school system may produce tensions, which underscores the importance of nurturing productive relationships with others in school communities. Roby (2011) concurred that teacher leaders require resilience to ameliorate teacher isolation and improve school culture.

The Language of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is a construct that has attained a high profile among educators and policy makers, particularly in Western countries. It was described by Lambert (2003, p. 425) as "reciprocal, purposeful learning in a community" and as a responsibility of all members of a school. In fact, Lambert (2003) posited that all teachers are leaders. Harris (2003) suggested that not all teachers necessarily are leaders but, rather, they can choose to engage in collective leadership. She argued that our understanding of teacher leadership is enhanced by distributed leadership theory that identifies leadership as shared among interdependent members of a school staff. Wenner and Campbell (2017) defined teacher leadership as "teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom" (p. 139). A broader perspective was offered by Frost et al. (2018) who defined teacher leader as any adult, regardless of role, exercising leadership in a school while working in an educational capacity. York-Barr and Duke (2004) observed that many of the reports about teacher

leadership do not define it clearly, although they noted the strong focus of teacher leadership on improving teaching and learning.

Teacher leadership has been linked to other descriptors such as instructional leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Pellicer and Anderson (1995) offered the perspective that effective instructional leadership is premised on teachers assuming the major responsibility for instructional leadership while working collaboratively with principals. The perspective that teacher leaders can and should be responsible for instructional leadership is consistent with York-Barr and Duke's (2004) observation that a key attribute of teacher leadership is a focus on improving teaching and learning. The suggestion that principals and teachers ought to collaborate is also consistent with the term parallel leadership offered by Crowther (2002) which he said needs to be based on mutualism, i.e., shared trust and respect, that underpins a shared purpose and pedagogical development.

Murphy (2005) connected teacher leadership to school improvement by highlighting it as an alternative to the traditional formal leadership role of principals. He noted that it facilitates a shift from hierarchical leadership and enhances the capacity of schools to change and to respond to reform initiatives. Murphy (2005) emphasized that teacher leadership is dependent upon the willingness of formal school leaders to share power and decision making with their teacher colleagues.

Much of the teacher leadership literature has been authored by Western researchers based in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. However, there has been a recent surge of calls for cross-cultural examination of teacher leadership. Schott et al. (2020) called for cross-cultural research after conducting an extensive review of theoretical and empirical publications focusing on teacher leadership. Nguyen et al. (2020) also noted that their review focused on publications in English and missed what they described as "a hidden literature concerning teacher leadership written in other languages" (p. 72).

The dearth of information about teacher leadership in non-Western contexts constitutes a dominance of Western thought and the relative absence of research and policies that exist in other contexts. This underscores Hallinger's (2018) contention that leadership of all types should be explored in relation to institutional, community, cultural, economic, political, and school improvement contexts. Insufficient consideration of context can result in inappropriate cross-cultural borrowing of educational constructs and lead to the failure of teacher leadership to enhance localized educational practices. This may be particularly important in emerging democracies intent on nurturing strong educational systems and challenging the dominance of external perspectives.

Additional research about manifestations of teacher leadership in non-Western countries may highlight how teachers enact leadership without the language of teacher leadership drawn from current literature. For example, Machumu and Kaitila (2014) and Nyamubi (2017) described how job satisfaction in Tanzania is fostered by democratic leadership styles of headteachers, support for professional development, and engagement with school communities, including parents, students, and community members. Even though the reports from Tanzania do not use the term teacher leadership, features of teacher leadership may be evident in some

schools. Similar observations are emerging from Spanish-speaking countries such as Colombia, Mexico, and Spain (Fierro-Evans & Fortoul-Ollivier, 2021; Pineda-Báez, 2021).

Examining teacher leadership in context may lead to more informed use of the construct and, based on House's (1986) description of mutual adaptation, facilitate the reformulation of teacher leadership to better fit local social, cultural, and political contexts. In fact, teacher leadership may evolve in ways that conflict with how the term is understood in Western countries. Schott et al. (2020) described the importance of understanding teachership in context and also across cultures in order to strengthen understandings of what antecedents facilitate teacher influence within school communities. It will be important to guard against tensions among the understandings of international researchers, practitioners, and policy makers that would limit their capacity to learn from one another. This would constitute a missed opportunity to enact contextualized teacher leadership intended to improve teaching and learning.

Influences on Teacher Leadership

To explore the dimensions of teacher leadership thoroughly it is useful to consider the purposes of education as they are understood by organizations, policy makers, and researchers in different contexts. For example, UNESCO (2016) stated that education is a basic human right and a public good. The OECD (2019) emphasized the need for students to develop the knowledge and skills adequate for them to live meaningful, responsible lives while contributing to their societies. A related purpose of education is to support a thriving society (Webber & Scott, 2012, p. 45) that "respects differences in ability, culture, language, religion, and gender." One goal of the Global Partnership for Education (2020) is to allow children access to education during periods of conflict and disaster so they can experience a sense of normalcy and develop resilience. In Colombia the government has indicated its intent to facilitate ethical values and capacity to reduce inequity and promote national peace and economic prosperity (World Bank, 2015). Evident in some nations' educational statements is the influence of UNESCO (2016) which is a significant contributor to educational funding in those countries.

Teachers' unions are organizations that may both support and obstruct teacher leadership. There have been calls for teacher unions to support their members' contributions toward improving the quality of teaching and learning, and their service as proponents of egalitarian schooling (Moe, 2016; Poole, 2000). National and regional contexts vary widely but union leaders in countries like Canada find it difficult to promote the value of high-quality public education while also addressing the short and long-term educational interests of teachers (Poole, 2000). In the context of the United States, there is a similar responsibility of union leaders to lobby for improvements to "wages, benefits, working conditions, and job security" (Moe, 2016, p. 272), sometimes at the cost of accountability for high-quality teaching and

learning. Student assessment initiatives that reveal good and poor teaching may invite school choice that “empowers poor and minority students, who are often trapped in the nation’s worst schools” (Moe, 2016, p. 44) but leave remaining teachers and students languishing with insufficient support.

It is estimated that teachers’ unions in South Africa control approximately one-third of schools in that country (Mahlangu, 2019). This leads to teacher recruitment and selection being the result of the “buying and selling of posts” (p. 115) which, in turn, determines who exercises influence as teacher leaders and how they lead. Alternatively, an OECD report about education systems in Latin America (Radinger et al., 2018) noted that teacher unions contribute in proactive, constructive ways to professional learning, career development, and policy development and implementation. Bruns and Luque (2015) offered a counter view that teachers’ unions in Latin America are most concerned with protection of job stability and with resisting teacher performance evaluation. The wide variance across contexts in perceptions of teachers’ unions on teacher leadership is demonstrated by Bangs and MacBeath’s (2012) summary of the positive contributions by unions in North America to professional learning and teacher leadership. They also described that some high-performing countries have strong teacher unions, e.g., Finland, Japan, and Australia. It is in the interest of all educational stakeholders to facilitate the complex work of teacher leaders which can be fraught with political challenges such as competing demands among school community members, relationship tensions with other teachers, and demands on personal time (Zepeda et al., 2013).

Teacher leaders operate in the context of the macro and micro politics of schooling. Within the larger school community, teacher leaders need to be aware of the ongoing debates among proponents and critics of progressive education (e.g., Edmondson, 2006; Sadovnik et al., 2017; Schutz, 2011). They also should be aware of the influence of globalization and its critics (e.g., Lyons, 2020). Teacher leaders will be subject to discourses that utilize or weaponize words like neoliberalism, privatization, humanism, decolonization, and more. Heated debates about important topics such as racial violence, poverty, and LGBTQS concerns will continue to be part of the political sphere within which teacher leaders work. Similarly, the micropolitics of schools – teacher collaboration, pedagogical perspectives, budgetary constraints, and more (Blase, 1991) – will determine to a large extent how teacher leaders exercise influence and how successful they can be in improving teaching and learning. As a result, teacher leaders must be skilled at ameliorating the demonization of the views of others and at seeking common understandings that facilitate cohesion and the common good.

The challenges of contemporary schools have increased the relevance of teachers as leaders. Legacies of colonial eras persist in nations as diverse as Cameroon (Ndille, 2021), Pakistan (Jabeen, 2020), Greenland and Australia (McLisky, 2017), Colombia (Murillo, 2009), and Canada (Ottmann, 2009). As a result, teachers have become leaders in decolonization initiatives intended to reshape school structures and curricula. At the same time, teacher leaders must navigate the intersections among race, same sex-sexuality, faith, and school (Carlile, 2020; Francis, 2021).

Other potentially divisive topics such as climate change (Lombardi & Sinatra, 2013) and the unique learning needs of the children of refugees seeking escape from civil unrest and poverty (Başaran, 2021) increase the demands on teacher leaders to manifest social and political acumen, plus the skills of collaboration and reflection (Bond, 2011). They must exercise such attributes while functioning effectively in teams (Crowther et al., 2008) and maintaining a focus on student learning (Bond, 2011).

The social and economic factors that Hallinger (2018) described influence the capacity of individual teachers to exercise leadership. For example, Mbepera (2017), in her description of leadership in rural schools in Tanzania, described how gender discrimination may be evident in schools because women lack sufficient support from their organizations and their larger societies. Besides gender-related considerations, social instability due to migration of refugees escaping war zones changes how teachers manifest leadership. For example, in Turkey teachers find they need to direct their efforts toward supporting Syrian students' literacy development, communication with families whose members do not speak Turkish, and children's sense of safety and belonging (Gokce & Acar, 2018). Further, economic factors shape the focus of teacher leaders' work. Cisneros-Cohernour (2021) described how poverty in the context of one state in Mexico is a determinant of slow progress in schools, possibly due to insufficient access to health services, adequate housing, and even enough food.

Clearly gender-related disparities, social upheaval, and socioeconomic differences influence the capacity of teacher leaders to be influencers in their school communities. As a result, policy makers can place unrealistic expectations on educational personnel to solve social problems. Hooge et al. (2011, p. 298) described this phenomenon as "educationalisation" which is the result of a reasonable desire to see students access educational opportunities and to achieve well. However, the expectation that schools will address social and economic problems expands the mandate of school personnel beyond the formal curriculum. The result can be polarized debate about the role of teachers among policy makers, community members, and unions. Mahlangu (2019) outlined the struggle in South Africa among government regulatory agencies, unions, and members of the public about the roles and responsibilities of teachers. Hossain and Hickey (2019) and the OECD (2020) noted the close relationship between quality education and economic growth but also described how political factors also play a significant role in a nation's economy.

The discourse about teacher leadership in different cultural contexts reflects a wide range of interests. For example, the OECD (2012) supports the work of teachers as a tool for addressing poverty and economic well-being in developing countries. Statistics Canada (2012) data underscore the strong connection between education levels and employment, which supports the voices of those who support education for the purpose of employment. The World Bank and UNESCO are prominent voices in developing countries that exercise power and influence by funding initiatives that are intended to ameliorate the impacts of low incomes, natural disasters, and social upheaval. Unfortunately, dependency upon aid funding for

education in Tanzania is perceived by some to result in unreliable and unsustainable educational practices (Mgaiwa, 2018).

It is evident in the literature that there is a plethora of strong voices contributing to the discussion of teacher leadership. The dialogue can be confrontational and highly politicized, but it also can be mutually respectful. Hardman et al. (2015), who described teacher development in Tanzania, suggested that positive professional learning and effective development of teachers' capacity to improve teaching and learning should be based on collaboration among all stakeholders in the education system, including teachers, government personnel, and teacher educators, for example. In this way, shared goals can emerge from dialogue even when they are based in part on competing voices.

Global Context

Teacher leadership can be viewed from both a global perspective and a local perspective. At the global level, teachers in many contexts practice their profession in the context of uncertainty and continuous change. Hallinger and Bryant (2013) noted the decades-long period of educational reform throughout the world. For instance, they described educational reforms in Thailand in response to evolving social and economic conditions, but with an accompanying slow adoption by teachers of changes to teaching practices. The reluctance of teachers to try more student-centered teaching practices may be the result of budget restrictions, political instability, and a lack of coherence between proposed reforms and the values of local cultures.

Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2008) provided parallel perspectives in the context of the United States where teachers often perceive ongoing reform initiatives as disconnected from local challenges. They described how professional learning networks can expand teachers' capacity to lead and implement changes in practices. However, Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2008) also cautioned that effective professional learning must be planned, deliberate, and ongoing. They observed that the challenges for teacher leaders can be addressed in part through online teaching communities that will help educators meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing global society.

Unexpected global events also can impact how teacher leaders learn and grow professionally. The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 led to almost immediate dramatic changes to how teachers work with students. Hill et al. (2020) shared how teachers in British Columbia, Canada, pivoted from face-to-face instruction in schools to online teaching and learning, with accompanying expectations for teachers to engage in community outreach in the form of telephone and in-person but socially distanced communication. As a result, teachers in British Columbia developed new instructional strategies that align with remote learning and modified their professional practices within a context of heightened uncertainty and complexity.

Concurrent with pandemic-related restrictions to global travel and migration, political events have triggered changes to what students need to be educated and to the skills and knowledge that teachers need to be effective. Horsford (2018) shared her views of how the Trump presidency introduced widespread uncertainty through the United States and internationally. She underscored the responsibility of teachers to lead and to advocate for safe, supportive learning environments. Political instability in other nations such as Brazil has reduced the focus in that country on educational matters and the need for more schools, impacting the role of teachers (Chagas-Bastos, 2019). In Tanzania, recent government policies have increased access to primary education, but with insufficient attention to secondary and tertiary education, and a concurrent change from English to Kiswahili as the language of instruction in primary schools and an intention to do the same in secondary schools (Anyimadu, 2016).

Teachers in international settings also grapple with the impact on learners of forced migration and political unrest (Alzaroo & Lewando Hunt, 2003). For example, Rose (2019) described how teachers' belief in their power to facilitate the learning of refugee students in New South Wales, Australia, was evidenced by innovation and entrepreneurship and the "willingness to take charge and act" (p. 85). Wong and Moorhouse (2020) described a similarly enhanced commitment to teaching and learning by teachers of students in Hong Kong who were impacted by the "COVID-19 pandemic and the 2019 Hong Kong protests" (p. 650). According to Greaves et al. (2021), who reported the experiences of Syrian refugee teachers in Lebanon, professional development that focuses on best practices related to teaching in times of crisis can enhance teacher leadership. Importantly, teachers who emerge as leaders in difficult circumstances are open to new ideas and manifest the ability to work independently. They also manage to accumulate detailed knowledge of the lived experiences of their students. Aydin and Kaya's (2019) findings related to the ability of Turkish teachers to support students who are Syrian refugees corroborate the importance of professional development and a rich understanding of "the refugee journey" (p. 64). It appears that teacher leaders strive to manifest resilience, creativity, and professionalism despite challenging conditions imposed by social unrest and forced migration.

The strategies associated with teacher leadership are consistent with Doney's (2013) finding, in an American context, that teacher resilience is associated with an understanding that their professional identity is an evolving construct and that nurturing relational connections is important. The strategies are parallel to Beutel et al.'s (2019) findings in eastern Australia that teacher resilience is enhanced when a strong support system is developed and that resilience is enhanced when teachers are able to distinguish between attributes within their environment that they can change and things that they cannot.

Local Context

An understanding of global influences on teacher leadership can inform practitioners and teacher educators but equally important is an understanding of the complexities of local school communities. Goddard (2010) argued for the need for educational leaders to integrate their understandings of global and local perspectives. He noted that in many countries Indigenous and rural residents have migrated to urban areas. The result, according to Goddard, is an evolving population in urban schools that is more diverse and multiethnic than ever before.

Ødegaard (2016) suggested the need for the “glocal teacher” (p. 55) who understands the needs of learners from a pluralistic, heterogeneous perspective while also attending to the “local, situated and culture-sensitive” (p. 55). The work of a glocal teacher may be challenging, particularly in an era when new technologies allow learners to cross the boundaries of time and space in the context of the knowledge society (Trippstad & Huang, 2016). In fact, even very young learners may develop a sense of membership in virtual communities that go far beyond venues determined by geography or by traditional parent and teacher safety considerations (Reich et al., 2014).

Luciak (2010) noted that societal diversity is a long-standing consideration for educators but one that continues to evolve. For example, teachers must collaborate with one another and school community members to determine how to balance the dominant language and culture with the cultural differences represented by students. In addition to the cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity among learners, educators continue to address socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation, and other factors that influence identity (Luciak, 2010).

The processes of reconciliation and decolonization are evident in numerous parts of the world. Teachers in Alberta, Canada, are required to demonstrate competence in “applying foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit” (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 5). Schools in South Africa seek to ameliorate the long-lasting effects of apartheid and to understand students who appear to discard “homogeneous identities for an unfixed and inclusive ‘South African’ identity” (Vandeyar, 2008, p. 296). In Botswana, Pansiri and Majwabe (2020) noted that country’s failure to decolonize its education system with the result that it has not escaped its cultural and historical hegemonies.

It is clear that local school communities are anything but entirely local in structure, sociocultural composition, or pedagogical approaches. Teacher leaders face the daunting challenge of honoring or even challenging local histories and values while navigating legal, policy, and curricular frameworks that may have their origins situated in other times and places. While formal leaders are expected to work closely with other schools and with local community members, teachers are encouraged to work within a distributed leadership model that strives to improve teaching and learning (OECD, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter offers a rationale for studying teacher leadership, the spheres of influence for teacher leaders, and the teacher identity that informs their values, beliefs, and sense of agency. Next, the language of teacher leadership was profiled with a particular focus on non-Western voices and on the variety of influences upon teacher leaders. Global and local factors shaping teacher leadership were summarized.

This chapter offers a lens for studying teacher leadership within the hallmarks provided by Nguyen et al. (2020). That is, the parameters of influence, collaboration and trust, leadership within and beyond the classroom, and a focus on teaching and learning were used as the base for viewing teacher leadership. Then, teacher leadership was analyzed vis-à-vis relevant factors observed in the educational literature. Consideration was given to who is interested in teacher leadership and why. The professional identity of educators who fit the hallmarks was explored in relation to their development as leaders, their values and beliefs, and their sense of agency. The language of teacher leadership was profiled in relation to the voices that exercise control of the teacher leadership narrative.

Readers are invited to apply the lens shared in this chapter to the following chapters in this book which is intended to fill some of the gaps in understanding of teacher leadership across organizational and cultural contexts. The chapters highlight some of the implicit meanings and competing assumptions about teacher leadership that may contribute to confusion in school communities, particularly where the concept is applied outside of its original Western contexts.

To conclude, this book is intended to foster awareness of how teacher leadership is conceptualized and manifested differently across sociocultural conditions. Chapter authors have provided contextualized reports of teacher leadership in North American, European, African, Asian, Latin-American, and Australasian settings. Their goal is to contribute to the wider understanding of teacher leadership and of how professional development and university programs might contribute to effective school leadership.

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Chapter 2

International Study of Teacher Leadership: A Rationale and Theoretical Framework



Charles F. Webber , Joan M. Conway , and C. P. van der Vyver 

Abstract Previous studies and literature reviews provide a strong base for the International Study of Teacher Leadership (ISTL) (www.mru.ca/istl) (for example, Bond, *The power of teacher leaders: Their roles, influence, and impact*. Kappa Delta Pi and Routledge, 2015; Frost, *International teacher leadership project: Phase 1*. University of Cambridge, 2011; Lambert, *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2003; Nguyen, *Res Educ Adm* 58(1): 60–80, 2020; Wenner and Campbell, *Rev Educ Res* 87(1): 134–171, 2017; York-Barr and Duke, *What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship*. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(3), 255–316, 2004). This chapter begins with a description of the important connections among these seminal works to closely related concepts, such as formal and informal leadership, school culture, professional development, and school improvement.

The chapter continues with an exploration of the levels of comfort and discomfort that existing teacher leadership literature elicits among some members of the international educational community. There are disquieting questions emerging from beyond Western contexts, such as “Are we doing something wrong?” or “Are

This report is based on research done as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. For more information, see the study website: www.mru.ca/istl

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we trying to force frameworks onto our contexts?” or “Shouldn’t we resist forcing square pegs into round holes?” These uncomfortable questions led to the identification of important needs that are shared in this chapter.

This is followed by a description of the study origins and the formation of the research team. The research design for examining teacher leadership across cultures is offered. The design draws upon previous theoretical and empirical reports but also the mostly unanswered questions that emerge from non-Western contexts: How do school-based educators in my context conceptualize teacher leadership?; How do systems leaders in my context conceptualize teacher leadership?; What are the values, beliefs, and assumptions underpinning teacher leadership discourses where I work?; and How prepared are classroom teachers in our schools to serve as teacher leaders?

The overarching purpose of the ISTL research design and its guiding research question is offered, along with a summary of the multi-year, multi-stage study that is the foundation for this book.

Keywords Teacher leadership · School improvement · Informal leadership · Cross-cultural borrowing · International Contexts

Why Study Teacher Leadership?

The concept of teacher leadership has been described in a variety of ways, almost all from Western perspectives. Comprehensive literature reviews by Wenner and Campbell (2017) and York-Barr and Duke (2004) highlighted the attributes of teacher leadership, such as collaboration, service to the school and larger community, and accountability for the achievement of the school vision and goals. More recently, Nguyen et al. (2020) underscored the importance of considering teacher leadership across cultures and contexts, as did Schott et al. (2020), a point corroborated by Hallinger’s (2018) description of the importance of context.

All the reviews emphasized the lack of clarity in how teacher leadership is defined. For instance, Grant (2019) acknowledged the scarcity of research about teacher leadership in Africa’s emerging democracies. In South Africa, the previous existence of the apartheid ideology inhibited the notion of teacher leadership due to its embracing of autocratic and hierarchical leadership in education and schools. After the abolishment of apartheid in 1994, educational leadership was decentralized and began to incorporate a focus on shared and distributed leadership. However, the practice of teacher leadership beyond the classroom is still limited (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011), probably because of the lack of a common understanding of teacher leadership. Grant (2019) suggested more research on teacher leadership to provide “robust conceptual tools and explanatory theories” (p. 50). Bush (2020)

observed that there is a dearth of leadership development opportunities generally throughout Africa and that teachers sometimes are mentored into formal leadership roles. However, he also noted that most aspiring school leaders are “left to fend for themselves” (p. 191).

In the North American context, Campbell et al. (2015) observed that teacher leadership is often used as a generic term. Also, Webber (2021) suggested that teacher leadership is a fluid concept with overlapping definitions and descriptions. In contrast, researchers in Latin America have described the almost total lack of any reference to teacher leadership and observed that mention of leadership in government and organizational documents is made in relation only to the role of school principals (Pineda-Baez et al., 2019). According to Fierro-Evans and Fortoul-Ollivier (2021), there is a similar lack of discourse related to teacher leadership in Mexico and non-Anglo-Saxon European countries such as Spain. Meanwhile, Pang and Miao (2017) acknowledged that most knowledge regarding the concept of teacher leadership comes from the west and the exploration thereof in Asia is largely unexplored. The role and contributions of teacher leaders in China are, however, acknowledged by referring to teacher leaders as “backbone teachers” (p. 96). Interview data with Shanghai principals revealed the role of teacher leaders in school reform (Pang & Mayo, 2017). Hallinger and Walker (2011) edited a special edition of *School Leadership and Management* that addressed the issue of “a pervasive feeling that policy-makers and practitioners continued to rely too heavily on both a knowledge base and training programs that were generated from other cultural contexts” (p. 300).

In Australia, standards at the lead teacher level (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018) are clearly outlined with descriptors of attainment such as “lead colleagues” (p. 10), “lead initiatives” (p. 12), “lead processes” (p. 10), “initiate collaborative relationships” (p. 20), and “advocate, participate in, and lead strategies” (p. 21). Further, there is a plethora of programs offered by various jurisdictions in support of building leadership in Australian schools, but the question still exists as to whether teacher leadership in Australian schools is a reality other than as an ascribed formal role. Various publications have projected the concept of teacher leadership from perspectives of professional development/learning (Lovett et al., 2015) and school improvement processes (Conway, 2015; Conway & Andrews, 2016a).

The *International Study of Teacher Leadership* (www.mru.ca/istl) is a response to the calls for additional cross-cultural studies of how teacher leadership is understood and manifested. This chapter begins with an exploration of current understandings of teacher leadership. Following that is an overview of how an international research team coalesced around a desire to study teacher leadership and then a description of the research plan that they developed collectively. The purpose of the study is to contribute to the wider understanding of teacher leadership and of how professional development and university programs might contribute to teacher leadership knowledge and skill development.

Current Understandings

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) shared the view that teacher leaders have the capacity to serve as agents of change in school improvement initiatives. Sterrett's (2015) description of teacher leaders as providing initiative and direction for realizing school goals corroborates the view of teacher leaders as change agents. Teacher leaders provide direction within their classrooms but also throughout schools and the communities they serve (Dufour & Fullan, 2013). They influence school cultures (Lambert, 2003; Petersen, 2015), reflect on their professional practices (Dawson, 2014), and learn with colleagues (Harris, 2003). Such manifestations of teacher leadership emphasize that school leadership can be shared among all school staff and not restricted to those in formal leadership appointments (Angelle & DeHart, 2016). Terms such as teacher empowerment, distributed leadership, and parallel leadership (Crowther, 2002, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) are sometimes attributed to varying ways of incorporating teacher leadership. There is agreement that hierarchical leadership structures should be replaced or at least modified to recognize the skills and knowledge held by educators who exert influence through both formal leadership appointments and informal activities.

In addition, Nguyen et al. (2020) noted that, to be effective, teacher leadership should be based on high levels of collaboration and trust, and focus on improving teaching and learning. The Western literature related to teacher leadership also addresses concepts including formal and informal influence, school culture, professional development, and school improvement (see Webber, 2021), which form the basis of the following discussion.

Formal and Informal Leadership

Integrating formal and informal leadership can have enhancing effects on the overall balance of staff/school leadership. Bezzina and Bufalino (2019) suggested that leadership and followership are forms of multi-directional professional interactions, and, in optimal environments, influence shifts among group members, making the differences between leaders and followers less acute. Fairman and Mackenzie (2015) stated that informal collaboration across professional roles has a stronger influence on teaching and learning than more direct facilitation by formal leaders.

There are numerous ways that teacher leaders influence without appointments to formal leadership roles. Zepeda et al. (2013) described how informal leaders influence by facilitating workshops in their schools, or by serving on curriculum design committees. They also may act as peer coaches, grade team leaders, or facilitators at parent and community meetings. Acquaro (2019) claimed that teacher leaders increase a school's capacity to address the complexity of twenty-first-century challenges and to advance student learning. Crowther (2002) offered the view that whole

school success involves formal and informal leaders engaging in shared professional development. Learning together allows teachers and principals to develop a common language, a shared vision, and a plan for achieving the vision (Berg, 2018). Zhang and Henderson (2018) noted that when principals collaborate with teachers, they facilitate higher levels of professionalism and improved student achievement. According to Zhang and Henderson, shared learning and collaboration requires formal leaders to have strong communication skills and confidence in teachers' decision-making capacities.

Development of informal leadership expertise is important early in teachers' careers. Zepeda et al. (2013), Murphy (2019), and Burns (2019), writing from American, Irish, and Canadian perspectives respectively, posited that initial teacher preparation can and should include opportunities for informal leadership development for pre-service teachers and their school hosts. Thomas and Brown (2019) concurred by stating that pre-service teachers should experience opportunities to develop their capacity to lead and influence others and decision-making processes.

School Culture

School culture is "the way people live in school groups" (Webber, 1994, p. 152) and the culture of each school is unique due to the shared interactions that occur among students, teachers, principals, and parents (Roby, 2011). As a result, the role of teacher leaders is important because, as insiders, they understand the context of the school and are able to navigate the many facets of school culture. They are less likely to be perceived as supervisors by their peers and can engage in discourse about instructional leadership within a nonthreatening relationship (Mangin, 2005).

It is important that teacher leaders understand they operate within school cultures that typically support teacher autonomy and resist change (Mangin, 2005). Therefore, teacher leader efforts to act as instructional coaches and to maintain a focus on improving teaching and learning are key elements of a positive school culture in which student success is the foremost priority (Ezzani, 2020). Even positive school cultures in which instructional improvement is possible are environments where change can take years to achieve (Pankake & Abrego, 2017). Indeed, change may not be possible in some schools because of what Deal and Peterson (2016) referred to as "toxic cultures" (p. 182) within which influential informal leaders sabotage, repeat pessimistic stories, see themselves as martyrs, and neglect their core purpose of serving learners.

The positive influence of teacher leaders is more likely to occur in schools where principals facilitate their work (Mangin, 2005). Carpenter (2015) observed that positive relationships and a collaborative school culture must be predicated upon voluntary participation by teachers (see also Mangin, 2005) and an equal, reciprocal relationship between teachers and administrators. Such a culture fosters teacher perceptions that their knowledge and skills are valued and permits the establishment of

instructional improvement structures that are based on shared instructional goals (Ezzani, 2020).

Facilitating teacher leadership can be an effective change strategy that challenges teacher isolation and facilitates collaboration among teachers (Berg & Zoellick, 2018). Teacher leadership fosters the establishment of shared purpose and common values (Conway & Andrews, 2016b). It also supports ongoing school improvement that focuses on student achievement (Carpenter, 2015).

Professional Development

The range of understandings of teacher leadership represented in the literature speaks to the complexity of the work (Taylor et al., 2019). For instance, school cultures can be difficult to understand and to change, professional learning is multidimensional, and collegiality can be fragile. Therefore, it is important that teachers with leadership potential have opportunities to learn how to influence in positive and productive ways. They can be more effective informal leaders if they understand how to support risk-taking by other teachers (Peine, 2008), to facilitate a common vision of teaching and learning excellence (Wilmore, 2007), and to facilitate active engagement and open communication among their peers (Zepeda, 2019). The greater the teacher leadership capacity in the school, the more likely it is that a strong cultural identity aligned with improving student achievement can be sustained (Hickey & Harris, 2018).

Zepeda (2019) described a wide range of teacher leader development strategies that can help formal and informal leaders assume responsibility and accountability for student learning (Peine, 2008). For instance, Zepeda (2019) offered a menu of teacher leader professional development such as shadowing other teacher leaders, participating in professional meetings and events, engaging in graduate study, and participating in online professional development groups. She highlighted how these types of professional learning activities can be long-term and job-embedded. Other examples include study groups, critical friend networks, and action research teams, all of which can clarify teacher leaders' thinking and allow them to share their knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, Zepeda drew upon her writing about peer coaching and the influential work of Joyce and Showers (2002) to emphasize the potential of the peer coaching cycle: study of theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching. Joyce and Showers highlighted the need for coaching if professional learning is to be implemented successfully in classroom practice. They also cautioned that peer coaching, and related models such as clinical supervision (Acheson, 1997), not be used for teacher evaluation. However, the clinical supervision model of pre-conference, observation, and post-conference is widely used as the structure of teacher evaluation in much of the Western world. The job-embedded professional learning strategies offered by Zepeda (2019) and Joyce and Showers (2002) assume that teacher leaders know their schools and can foster professional

development in more productive ways than can be achieved by outside experts or consultants (Hickey & Harris 2018; Margolis, 2012).

Others have offered practical guidance for teacher leaders in their facilitation of professional development. Peine (2008) described the use of professional growth plans by teachers that identify the focus for growth, establish learning goals and activities, and monitor progress. Professional growth plans for individual teacher learners parallel Wilmore's (2007) strategies for facilitating school-based professional development: establish goals, garner resources, choose a timeline, and evaluate success. Wilmore cautioned that facilitating personal and collective professional development is difficult and complex. It requires planning, resourcing, management, and reflection. Boylan (2018) noted that teacher leadership of professional development builds skills among teachers to mobilize and broker learning initiatives and to create professional learning networks. The result, according to Hickey and Harris (2018), can be a strong organizational culture that is aligned with the primary goal of improving student achievement. Teacher leader responsibility for professional development results in them assuming accountability for teacher learning (Peine, 2008).

School Improvement

Definitions of school improvement are numerous, but they all describe efforts to improve learning, teaching, and student achievement (Harris, 2002). School improvement includes developing the abilities of school community members to plan, initiate, and manage change (Harris, 2002). The processes associated with school improvement are complicated and relate to changing school culture, and considering school needs holistically, while ensuring that teachers are central players and feel ownership for school improvement decisions (Brown & Poortman, 2018; Murphy, 2005).

School improvement is contextual and must be focused on teachers' professional practices (Murphy 2005; Taylor et al., 2011). It assumes shared leadership between formal school leaders and teacher leaders who collaborate to design their own solutions to the challenges that they face. They strive to participate in democratizing how decisions are made in their schools, so school improvement processes are relevant and sustainable (Brown & Poortman, 2018; Murphy, 2013).

Proponents of school improvement suggest that teacher leaders can and should be involved in engaging their peers and other school community members in planning improvement plans (Taylor et al., 2011). It is primarily by working with one another that school cultures can allow members to negotiate and accept differences (Murphy, 2013) as they engage in the ongoing and time-consuming process of school improvement.

Murphy (2005) shared his view that teachers and school improvement benefit from teacher leadership preparation that is based within the school and supported fully by formal school leaders. Taylor et al. (2011) stated that teacher leaders require

a strong set of interpersonal skills that help them to exercise “relational leadership” (p. 91) with and among their peers. Such social acumen can be acquired and nurtured through in-school learning networks (Brown & Poortman, 2018). Teacher leadership development in schools can heighten teacher leaders’ awareness of how resistance to school improvement initiatives is normal and that the tendency of schools to revert to previous practices should be expected (Murphy, 2013). Contextualized leadership development can mitigate the damage to school improvement plans when there is significant turnover in formal and informal school leaders.

Mangin (2005) cautioned that formal school leaders may be tempted to divert the focus of teacher leaders’ work to administrative roles and responsibilities rather than to direct it to school improvement processes. Murphy (2005) suggested that school improvement planners be aware of the possibility that some participants may focus on teacher leadership primarily as a tool for wresting administrative control from principals and for not attending explicitly to the personal and collective responsibility for change efforts.

Teacher Leadership Uncertainty

The variety of conceptions of teacher leadership that occurs in the literature has led to some uncertainty among practitioners and policy makers about how to recognize teacher leadership or even to determine if it should be facilitated in their contexts. Furthermore, misunderstanding of teacher leadership in relation to formal leadership may obscure the value and utility of the concept as school staff members practice decision making in their schools.

The presence of teachers in their communities has historically been of interest in terms of their role firstly as the teacher, but frequently as the invited or even nominated leader of a specific task or position. Moreover, their position in the community was often perceived as one of higher knowledge with the ability and skills to be the referent to a range of issues or topics. For example, teachers in small rural communities in Canada and Australia were among the most educated people in their communities and, as such, exercised considerable formal and informal influence on local affairs. Schools served as community gathering places for students and teachers during the day and, at other times, as venues for meetings of municipal governments and social gatherings. In those contexts, teachers served as organizers, moderators, and hosts. Even in recent years, when teachers in rural districts of Australia successfully engage with community members, they may be accepted as influential members of their communities (Halsey & Drummond, 2014; Hazel & McCallum, 2016).

However, colonial influences also disrupted Indigenous educational practices and even community structures. That is, assimilation policies in both Australia and Canada resulted in residential or missionary schools that removed Indigenous children from their families and placed them under the influence of European teachers and principals. The legacy of assimilation policies influences how members of

Indigenous communities continue to perceive teachers from outside of their communities (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

Currently, teachers in nations such as Tanzania, in some instances, are held in high regard and, as they establish themselves in communities, may become regarded as elders and power brokers within their contexts. Nonetheless, some pre-service and practicing teachers in East Africa may hold a “deficit-based thinking” perspective (Kulkarni & Hanley-Maxwell, 2015, p. 78) about other members of their school communities. Meanwhile, in South Africa, the role of teachers and school leaders was shaped by both colonialism and apartheid systems of governance (Moloi & Bush, 2006). Since 1994 and the implementation of a democratic system of governance, educational policies have supported the role of teachers in a more distributed form of educational management.

In other non-Western nations, teachers may not be engaged in decision making within their schools and communities. For instance, Cisneros-Coheurnour (2021) described the continued dominance of hierarchical authority systems in Mexico that limit the influence of teachers in their school communities. Similarly, Pineda-Báez (2021) reported a hierarchical policy structure in Colombia and recommended the inclusion of teachers as co-constructors of educational policies with the intent of enhancing the role of teachers as leaders.

Understandings of teacher leadership are influenced by factors such as global migration, technology, and other disruptive influences. For instance, increasing urbanization during the twentieth century in many contexts has altered the immediacy of teacher influence in their communities. Impacts of teacher influence include acceptance of diversity, and cross-cultural literacy (Watson, 2011). Moreover, recent changes in the roles of teachers due to the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to result in emerging understandings of how teachers influence and lead within their school communities (Edwards et al., 2020).

Influences on Teacher Leaders

The literature on leadership is replete with references to how the influence of educators is both enhanced and limited by the perceptions they have of themselves, and that others have of them. That is, how teachers are expected to think and act (Beijaard et al., 2004), their levels of professional autonomy, and professional identities shape how well they implement new curricula and respond to educational policy agendas (Karousiou et al., 2019). In turn, a teacher’s professional identity, although personal, is affected greatly by their organizational and cultural contexts (Beijaard et al., 2004). Teachers reinterpret their professional identity on an ongoing basis which “manifests itself in teachers’ job satisfaction, occupational commitment, self-efficacy and change in level of motivation” (Carinus et al., 2012, p. 116). Clearly, the leadership capacity of individual teachers is determined to a large extent by the safety and risk tolerance of their work environments and by their ability to self-reflect.

Issues of race, religion, and gender influence teachers' abilities to serve as teacher leaders. They can both support and limit teachers' abilities to reflect, feel empowered, and influence students and peers. Most teachers in North America continue to represent primarily "white, middle class, and Christian backgrounds" (Cutri, 2009, p. 57). In South Africa, after democracy was established in 1994, students moved to schools of their choice in search of quality education, creating a diversity in schools which was previously unknown to teachers and administrators. These changes brought about new and challenging demands on teachers (Vandeyar, 2010).

Another factor considered to be of influence is the socio-cultural demographics of teachers in other nations which undoubtedly will vary, but what is significant is the powerful influence of teachers' backgrounds and life experiences on their interactions with students, colleagues, and other school community members. For example, Benn (2002) reported the experiences of Muslim women who were studying to become teachers in the United Kingdom. The women reported feeling isolated, and faced religious prejudice, implicating their capacity to influence, reflect, and risk which are some of the important attributes of teacher leaders. Relatedly, Aujla-Bhullar (2018) shared how minority women teachers in Canada were able to establish high levels of trust with their students who also were visible minorities. The women described the power of critical reflection about "incidents of discrimination, marginalization and oppression... [to develop a] ...sense of self-worth" (Aujla-Bhullar, 2018, p. 75).

Additional salient influences on teacher leaders include their ages and career stages. Research from The Netherlands (Geeraerts et al., 2018) suggested that teachers may gravitate toward colleagues who are perceived to be similar in terms of age. Concurrently, the tendency for older workers to continue in the workforce can encourage generational stereotypes within multi-aged teacher teams. The stereotypes can be positive and counterproductive for both older and younger teachers but, either way, they can impact how teacher leadership is manifested. Geeraerts and her colleagues observed that most intergenerational learning among teachers was reciprocal and occurred in the context of daily practice and in the form of informal discussions. Younger teachers had a stronger influence on older peers in areas related to innovative teaching and the use of technology, while older workers had more of an impact on their younger colleagues in relation to classroom management, self-regulation, and community building.

Power and politics are factors in how teacher leadership is understood and enacted. Hossain and Hickey (2019) described the political opposition of teacher unions to the challenge of raising teacher standards and accountability. For instance, in South Africa, the Education Department effectively controls education in just a third of the provinces (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Where departmental authority and control is weak, teacher unions step in and influence various aspects, including the appointment of teachers (Mahlangu, 2019). Bruns et al. (2019) reported that teacher leaders in countries like Mexico, Chile, and Ecuador exercise influence in the context of highly politicized labor organizations and a history of union resistance to reforms. Vavrus (2009) described the social and political

challenges associated with implementing a constructivist approach to teaching in Tanzania without a corresponding decrease in teacher/student ratios and increase to the length of teacher education programs. To be influential, teacher leaders in conditions similar to those in Tanzania need to navigate a complex array of material conditions, local traditions, and “the cultural politics of teaching in Africa” (p. 310).

Additional dimensions to the context of teacher leadership can be the result of colonial legacies. For example, the language of instruction in schools and in teacher education institutions may restrict or enable access (Feldmann, 2016). Teaching in the local language(s) may increase access to citizens who speak the language(s), while restricting or allowing dominance of the language of instruction to that of the colonial power may exclude a large majority of the local population. In South Africa, English is the language of instruction in most schools. However, few learners and teachers use it as a home language. The status associated with using a particular language is one of the factors that is influential in choosing schools where English is the language of instruction as opposed to the home language (Mophosho et al., 2019). There is a corresponding impact on the capacity of women and men to become teachers and, if they do, on their influence and leadership in their schools and communities. Further, teacher leaders who seek to exercise influence in contexts where colonial epistemologies have weakened or replaced traditional epistemological paradigms (Nyamnjoh, 2012), may grapple with approaches to teaching and learning that are contested by local and regional community members.

Clearly, the professional activities of teacher leaders occur in complex sociocultural contexts. They require a host of attributes that are not addressed in detail in the current literature about teacher leadership. That is, to be influential, teacher leaders must demonstrate localized social and political acumen that informs what might be called bespoke educational policies and practices.

Different Manifestations

Dimmock (2020) described the importance of creating cross-cultural valid knowledge that is relevant to the social and cultural settings where educational leaders practice. The challenges of generating culturally relevant knowledge about teacher leadership emerged early in discussions among the members of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* project. It is noted that 18 members of the original research team represented ten countries – Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and during the second year of the study, additional contributors, from Canada, China, Mexico, Morocco, South Africa, and Spain, joined as affiliated researchers.

Several important points emerged during the research team’s initial planning meetings. The researchers shared a longstanding interest in educational leadership teaching and research, and all were familiar with the term *teacher leadership*. However, they noted the differences in meaning that arise from working in contexts with different cultures, histories, and languages. The assumption of Western

researchers that the concept of teacher leadership was situated similarly in other cultures proved to be incorrect. It led research team members from non-Western countries to ask disquieting questions such as, “Are we doing something wrong?” and “Are we trying to force frameworks into our contexts?” and “Shouldn’t we resist forcing square pegs into round holes?”. Team members from Colombia, Spain, and Mexico noted the virtual absence in educational policy documents of the term teacher leadership or even of discernible evidence of distributed or shared leadership theory. Team representatives from Eastern countries noted that understandings of teacher leadership in their context were drawn from Western literature but had to be modified to fit. For example, they referred to formal and informal leader influence as powerful and non-powerful leadership, which raised significant questions about the nature of teacher leadership.

Additional differences in research team members’ understandings of teacher leadership arose. Our senses of how life in schools and educational institutions should be lived overlapped but nonetheless were different. Our definitions of power, authority, and respect had to be examined and re-examined as new information was shared. We had to explain implicit assumptions from each of our cultures about how schools should be governed and administered. We observed the differences in credibility and professional stature that are ascribed to teachers and principals in our settings. We described the opportunities and restrictions associated with teacher leaders’ gender. We reported the occurrence in schools of “crab-bucket cultures” (Duke, 1994, p. 269) that resist the efforts of any member, never mind a teacher leader, to alter normal practice. In a crab-bucket culture, individuals who seek to alter the status quo may be dragged down or disparaged. Nonetheless, we agreed with Fullan’s (1994) longstanding claim that “... individual teachers need to become aware that a large part of their role is to improve their profession” (p. 51).

Various Applications

Although there is no common definition of teacher leadership in the literature, one commonality is that teacher leadership is about teachers influencing others (Schott et al., 2020). With the conceptual uncertainty about what teacher leadership is, it is reasonable to anticipate that there could be a range of understandings of the construct across different cultural contexts. Looking at the teaching standards in different countries, it is evident that the notion of teacher leadership is applied differently in each setting. In some cultures, there is an explicit reference to leadership competencies while in others only indirect references are made to attributes of teacher leadership. In many countries, there is a total absence of acknowledgment of teacher leadership to be found in teacher competencies and teaching standards.

However, various constituencies have been somewhat explicit about their understandings and expectations of teacher leadership. With regard to the application of teacher leadership, the United States acknowledges the value of teacher leaders. Teacher Leader Model Standards were developed by the Teacher Leadership

Exploratory Consortium (2011) which consists of members representing numerous institutions such as state departments of education, universities, colleges, teacher federations, and principal associations. These model standards explicitly spell out the domains, dimensions, and functions of teacher leadership in the United States, recognizing the formal as well as informal roles of teacher leaders. In South Africa, there is also an explicit acknowledgment of teacher leadership in official documentation. The Department of Education (2000) indicated that a teacher should be a “leader, administrator and manager” (p. 50). In this instance, the application of teacher leadership focuses on managing the classroom, teamwork, and reflection as well as participating in decision-making structures, which is indicative of teacher leadership within and beyond the classroom. Similarly, another policy document in South Africa, the Personnel Administrative Measures, outlines the duties and responsibilities of educators which include, “taking on a leadership role within the subject, learning area or phase as well as to contribut[ing] to the professional development of fellow teachers by sharing knowledge” and acting as a mentor (Department of Basic Education, 2016, p.18).

Similarly, the Australian professional standards for teachers also acknowledge the leadership role of teachers, by stating, “They may also take on roles that guide, advise or lead others” (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018, p. 7). A more formal teacher leadership role is ascribed to lead teachers who lead inside and outside the school. Some of the roles of these teacher leaders include being innovative teaching practitioners, mentoring fellow teachers, promoting innovative thinking, inspiring colleagues, and leading processes to improve student performance (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2018). As in South Africa and Australia, Uganda also acknowledges the notion of teacher leadership by indicating that teachers should exhibit leadership skills, “such as presenting ideas, leading discussions and making decisions” (Education International, 2011, p. 135). Other competencies related to attributes of teacher leadership include collaboration and teamwork, within and outside the school as well as reflection.

The notion of teacher leadership is explicitly indicated in Nigerian professional standards for teachers (Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, 2010) where it is stated that “teachers give and receive coaching and mentoring from colleagues, creating an enabling environment for charismatic leadership” (p. 35). One of the sub-themes in this document is academic leadership. Teamwork and collaboration with colleagues to achieve professional goals are some of the other manifestations of teacher leadership within this document. Acting as change agents, teachers are expected to motivate and inspire learners, colleagues, and members of society around them. Elsewhere, in the Malaysian Teacher standards, one of the competencies for teachers is indicated as leadership (Education International, 2011), but the concept is not explained. In Slovenia, key teacher competencies are described as organization and leadership. Although these reflect some dimensions of teacher leadership, they are confined to the actions of the teacher within the classroom, such as classroom management, planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning processes. Cooperative partnerships with colleagues within and outside the school, which

relate to the attributes of teacher leadership, are also mentioned (Education International, 2011).

In many cultural contexts there is no explicit application of teacher leadership, but indirect indications of attributes related to teacher leadership are evident. In the United Kingdom, for example, there is no explicit application of teacher leadership in their Teacher's Standards (Department for Education, 2011). There is some language used that could refer indirectly to some of the competencies and attributes of teacher leaders, such as accountability for learning outcomes, reflection on teaching, and management of classes. In the Canadian context teacher leadership is not mentioned explicitly in, for instance, the teaching quality standard (Alberta Education, 2018a, b). However, the language of teacher leadership is observable in the expectation that teachers should collaborate with other teachers and stakeholders within and outside the school, be reflective about their practices, and exhibit effective classroom management. Furthermore, in the Netherlands, the Professions in Education Act, which addresses the competencies of teachers, does not include explicit references to teacher leadership. However, some of the competencies show similarities to the attributes of teacher leadership: critical reflection, classroom management, and collaboration with stakeholders (Education International, 2011). In Mali, competencies of teachers are restricted to the classroom in areas such as classroom management and management of lessons (Education International, 2011).

In some South American countries, there is a lack of teacher leadership language in teaching standards documentation. For instance, in Colombia, there exists a hierarchical policy structure that limits the emergence of teacher leadership (Pineda-Báez, 2021). In Chile, the competencies of teachers are confined to what is happening in the classroom with little or only indirect mention of teacher leadership (Education International, 2011; Hurtado, 2021). The Brazilian National curricular guidelines make implied references to teacher leadership, for instance, developing teamwork and participating in the management of institutions (Education International, 2011). In India, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education also does not clearly acknowledge teacher leadership as a competency for teachers (National Council for Teacher Education, 2009). The Code of Professional Responsibility and Standards for the Teaching Profession in New Zealand also makes little direct or indirect reference to teacher leadership in their teaching standards (Education Council, 2017).

The Study

The *International Study of Teacher Leadership* (www.mru.ca/istl) is a collaborative initiative undertaken by a team of international researchers from North and South America, Australia, China, Europe, and Africa. The study emerged from discussions at a 2018 conference, hosted by Guangxi Normal University in Guilin, China, where some of the current team members met and expressed interest in exploring perspectives of teacher leadership within and across different cultural contexts. This spiked the formation of a collaborative research project.

The Research Team

Conducting longitudinal research while maintaining research team productivity and stability can be complex. Important considerations include group dynamics, members' skills, representativeness, stability, ethical publication, and cultures, plus many other factors. Moghim (2014) used the metaphor of "extended family" (p. 116) to describe a research group and suggested strategies for facilitating creativity, social cohesion, and personal motivation. Moghim's suggestions focused on research groups interacting through face-to-face meetings, and included attention to group size, meeting foci and duration, levels of formality, and personal comfort. At many levels, the extended family metaphor fits well with the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* research team. Many of the team members had collaborated with one another in previous cross-cultural research and brought personal connections and shared histories to the current study. However, some team members did not have shared connections when they joined the group; they were invited because of the skills and knowledge they could add to the teacher leadership initiative.

Some *International Study of Teacher Leadership* team members have a long history of meeting on a quasi-regular basis at international conferences. In fact, professional meetings were settings where many team members met in reality. However, this research initiative has relied heavily on technology-mediated interactions such as email, plus video- and audio-conferencing software. Thus, among the essential pragmatic considerations for selecting research team members was access to the internet and the ability to use relevant software tools. In addition, the decision was made to restrict membership to academics with the capacity to communicate in English. Another essential determinant for inclusion in the research team was academic acumen, demonstrated by a recognized record of scholarship, a promising beginning to a career as a researcher, and/or a strong recommendation from a respected colleague. Other factors influenced how the team members were selected. Because of the international nature of the research, it was important to have representation of diversity in areas such as culture, gender, religion, and race. Similarly, it was decided that it was important to include team members at different career stages with a range of political and epistemological orientations.

Once the basic determinants for inclusion were identified, *personal factors* were used to consider potential team members. These included attributes needed for successful participation in a long-term international research and publication initiative, that is, appreciation of competing religious, political, and social values. Such attributes are part of what Banks (2006) called cosmopolitanism or the ability to view oneself as a "citizen of the world who will make decisions and take actions that promote democracy and social justice" (p. 209). A corollary description of cosmopolitanism offered by Ostby (2018) suggested that it is the ability to view nothing human as alien while concurrently avoiding the temptation to imagine that others should be like us. A high level of cultural literacy needed to be accompanied by a strong sense of professional purpose, plus a corresponding balance of a sense of agency and humility. In addition, potential team members were identified because

of their personal resiliency and dependability, both desirable characteristics for members of a research team about to undertake a multi-year initiative.

It also was decided that three more personal factors were important. They included the ability to communicate successfully with colleagues during difficult conversations related to data analyses and research findings, the capacity for problem solving while conducting the research in the field, and the ability to contribute to a positive team culture.

Another factor was also part of the process of selecting research team members. It is related to cosmopolitanism but somewhat different. Webber and Robertson (1998) described it as *boundary-breaking leadership*, the “capacity to move learning beyond the boundaries normally imposed by cultures, roles, institutions, economics, and national borders” (section 4). Boundary-breaking leaders (Robertson & Webber, 2002) possess the ability to successfully navigate organizational nuances, status and power differentials, and culturally specific notions of time and space. For the purposes of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership*, research team members needed to possess or be willing to learn the various understandings of research ethics across cultures. They needed to demonstrate the understanding of what Freire (1970) referred to as situationality, as it relates to the “temporal-spatial conditions” (p. 109) of individual teacher leaders. Boundary-breaking leadership encompasses the construct of situationality, and what others (Edwards & Usher, 2008; Gruenewald, 2003) have referred to as pedagogy of place and place-based education.

The Research Design

An initial literature review (Webber, 2018) captured published understandings of teacher leadership and provided the team with a framework for analysis comprised of eleven attributes – accountability, advocacy, cultural responsiveness, collaboration, openness to change, professionalism, reflection, risk-taking, shared vision, stability, teamwork – and five considerations – context, leadership capacity, group dynamics, evidence-base, and political beliefs. Discussions of the literature review led the research team to formulate the purpose of the study, which is, *to contribute to the wider understanding of teacher leadership and of how professional development and university programs might contribute to teacher leadership knowledge and skill development.*

Members of the research team formulated the primary research question: *How is teacher leadership conceptualized and enacted and what are the implications for educational stakeholders?* Secondary research questions followed: *How do school-based educators conceptualize teacher leadership?; How do systems leaders conceptualize teacher leadership?; What are the values, beliefs, and assumptions underpinning teacher leadership discourses?; and, How prepared are classroom teachers to serve as teacher leaders?*

The design of the study was collaboratively formed by the team with a focus on the primary research question. The overall research design utilized a mixed

methodological approach using a convergent design (Creswell & Plano-Clarke, 2011) which moves from the broad literature review, through five phases.

The first of the five phases was an overarching phenomenographic study. Phenomenography, a qualitative research approach, focused on capturing the differences and variations in how people experience a particular phenomenon (Larsson & Holmstrom, 2007; Marton & Booth, 1997). This phase was used to explore the ways that the research team members related to the phenomenon of interest, *teacher leadership*. The findings were synthesized into a phenomenographic outcome space to reveal the range of qualitatively different ways that teacher leadership was experienced by participants from different geographical contexts and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The intent of the phenomenographic component was to contribute to fuller, richer, more culturally inclusive, and more sophisticated understandings of teacher leadership (Arden & Okoko, 2021).

The second phase of the study included document analyses in each researcher's cultural setting, with a focus on publicly available materials such as government policies, standards documents, teacher education program descriptions, and union statements. Third, a range of educational stakeholders – teachers, principals, and school community members – participated in semi-structured interviews and completed questionnaires related to teacher leadership.

Case studies, the fourth phase of the study, were delayed due to the global pandemic that began in 2020. However, some research team members completed virtual case studies that included teaming with specific schools to interview school community members and to participate in online planning meetings that were conducted by teachers and administrators. In-person case studies resumed in the latter half of 2021.

The fifth phase of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* consisted of oral histories conducted with samples of current and past classroom teachers who were selected because of the significance and magnitude of their influence in their communities.

In summary, the five phases of the study were designed to: (1) clarify the knowledge and perceptions that the research team brought to its collective work; (2) analyze educational organizations' public declarations relating to teacher leadership; (3) explore educators' personal understandings of teacher leadership; (4) understand the lived experience of teacher leaders in schools; and (5) add breadth and depth by gathering retrospective accounts of teacher leaders' experiences.

Group Sustainability

A final area of attention during the selection of research team members and the design of the study was *group sustainability*. It was understood at the outset that some attrition would occur as the study was designed and started. That is, it was anticipated that some individuals would find themselves over-committed or they might lose interest once the direction of the study of teacher leadership was determined. Others might find the challenges of working across many time zones,

requiring very early or late meetings, to be difficult because of other work and family commitments. In fact, three members withdrew from the study early in its implementation and it is possible that further attrition will occur because of job changes and family or health crises. However, a critical mass of research team members was assembled so that long-term sustainability can be achieved despite normal attrition.

Brower et al. (2020) suggested two sustainability tools, first a team charter which they say is “a document that clearly defines a team’s purpose, goals, strategies, and team members’ roles for holding each other accountable to mutual expectations” (p. 3). Most of the purposes of a team charter were addressed through the design of a study website (www.mru.ca/istl), plus an online archive of meeting notes and study protocols, and regular updates sent by email. Brower et al. (2020) also encouraged the use of a “Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed (RACI) matrix to clearly define tasks and responsibilities, allowing teams to effectively track progress and hold members accountable” (p. 3). As the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* proceeded, a form of RACI matrix was shared regularly as a work plan that documented study components, identified who was responsible for progress, what was to be done and when, and tracked outcomes of progress.

Additional sustainability tools were employed. These included regular communication and enough synchronous online meets to maintain momentum and commitment. Participation in joint symposia at academic conferences focused research and report writing timelines. Social events during conferences built on longer-term personal connections and shared histories. Finally, the nature of longitudinal research meant that career milestones – such as promotions, achievement of tenure, administrative appointments, and major publications – were celebrated in email communications and in synchronous face-to-face and virtual meetings.

Conclusion

Evidence in the literature clearly indicates the lack of clarity and the diversity of understanding teacher leadership, to which the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* aims to contribute in pursuit of a wider, and more culturally diverse understanding of the concept. A myriad of factors influencing an understanding of teacher leadership has been acknowledged and addressed throughout the chapters of this book as depicted by the researchers from different countries and cultural contexts highlighting their contextual influences impacting the understanding and manifestation of teacher leadership. The exploration of cross-cultural teacher leadership knowledge is a step forward in contributing to a global conceptualization of teacher leadership. The understanding and effect of formal, as well as informal dimensions of teacher leadership, within these cultural contexts may play a crucial role in the preparation of pre-service teachers fulfilling their future leadership roles. Further, contextualized leadership development opportunities for preservice and in-service teachers may be identified to contribute to teachers’ skills and knowledge, enhancing their capacity to influence and lead effectively, and with relevance in situ.

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Chapter 3

Exploring Cross-Cultural Understandings of Teacher Leadership: A Phenomenographic Study



Catherine Arden and Janet M. Okoko

Abstract The chapter reports a study that explored the diverse understandings and experiences of teacher leadership among members of a geographically dispersed and culturally diverse research group. Phenomenography as a methodological approach was used to illuminate the variation in the way members of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* (ISTL) research team (www.mru.ca/istl), located in 10 countries, experienced teacher leadership.

The authors begin the chapter by locating the study in the emerging literature on culturally diverse perspectives of teacher leadership and present a sociocultural theoretical framework to guide the interpretation and discussion of the findings through a cross-cultural learning lens. The study's design and methodology are then described, and the findings are presented in the form of categories of description reflecting nine discrete, structurally related conceptions of teacher leadership across three broad teacher leadership domains: (i) The school, school community, and formal education system; (ii) Teachers' work, the teaching profession, and teaching as a career; and (iii) The broader historical, socio-political and global contexts of teacher leadership. Insights into the cultural nuances of diverse understandings and experiences of the phenomenon of teacher leadership in the data are generated via

This report is based on research done as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. For more information, see the study website: www.mru.ca/istl.

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mapping conceptions of teacher leadership in each of the nine categories back to participants' geographical regions of origin. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for the work of the ISTL team and the extent to which they can serve as an experiential framework for thinking about cross-cultural understandings of teacher leadership among the teacher leadership research community.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Phenomenography · Context · Cross-culture · Leadership dimensions

Introduction

As noted in Chap. 1, the recent literature on educational leadership and teacher leadership suggests that both teachers' and researchers' understandings of these concepts are widely varied (Szeto & Cheng 2016; Nguyen et al., 2019; Spillane & Coldren, 2011; Webber, 2018). Moreover, much of the literature on teacher leadership is said to be based on a normative conception of educational leadership and has been found to offer interpretations, conceptual frameworks, and recommendations reliant on a knowledge base in which Western notions of leadership are embedded as if they were culturally transferable (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Hallinger & Walker, 2011; Litz, 2011; Webber, 2018). Dimmock and Walker (2005) and, later, Hallinger (2011) further argued that education scholars have lagged behind scholars from other disciplines when it comes to understanding the influences of societal culture, which has reportedly resulted in a "blind spot" in the conceptual lenses employed" in the empirical study of educational leadership (Hallinger & Walker, 2011 p. 299).

This chapter is based on a phenomenographic study that explored the diverse understandings and experiences of teacher leadership among 12 members of the geographically dispersed and culturally diverse *International Study of Teacher Leadership* (ISTL) research team (www.mru.ca/istl) with members located in 10 countries. The impetus for this study, which is one of five components of the ISTL research program, emerged as a direct result of discussions at a 2018 conference in which ISTL team members expressed interest in exploring perspectives of teacher leadership among the team to inform their ongoing collaborative research. Phenomenography was used to illuminate the variation in the way these researchers experienced teacher leadership. The researchers' "ways of experiencing" teacher leadership (also referred to as "conceptions" of teacher leadership) were inclusive of the meanings, understandings, and perspectives they ascribed to it (Barnard et al., 1999).

The purpose of this study was thus twofold: firstly, to provide a touchstone for the larger ISTL project by illuminating the diverse conceptions of teacher leadership among the membership of the research team. This would in turn provide a

“point of comparison” and “stimulus for dialogue” (Pham et al., 2005, p. 230) among the culturally diverse team members, thereby strengthening the ISTL research community by fostering a shared and more culturally inclusive understandings of teacher leadership. Secondly, it was hoped that the findings would add to the body of knowledge about teacher leadership by providing an “experiential framework” (Pham et al., 2005, p. 220) for more culturally nuanced thinking about teacher leadership and teacher leadership research. Finally, exploring how a group of researchers from culturally and geographically diverse communities experience teacher leadership was also seen as a useful starting point in the quest to illuminate, and potentially go some way toward eliminating, the so-called blind spot in teacher leadership research referred to earlier.

In this chapter, the authors locate the study in the emerging literature on culturally diverse perspectives of teacher leadership and present a sociocultural theoretical framework (Rogoff, 2003) to guide the interpretation and discussion of the findings through a cross-cultural learning lens. The chapter provides a description of the study’s design and methodology, where mind maps and semi-structured online interviews were used to explore the range of qualitatively different ways that the ISTL members related with, and ascribed meaning to the phenomenon of teacher leadership. The analytical framework and procedures used to identify significant variation in conceptions of teacher leadership are described. The findings – a set of nine qualitatively different ways of experiencing teacher leadership – are presented in the form of nine categories of description in the phenomenographic outcome space, mapped to reflect their structural relationships. They represent a point-in-time snapshot of the collective consciousness (Pham et al., 2002) of teacher leadership among this particular group of researchers.

The rest of the chapter expounds on these nine discrete, structurally related ways of experiencing teacher leadership in the collective categories and how they were mapped across three broad teacher leadership domains. The findings are then interpreted with reference to the study’s theoretical framework. Following this, further insights into the cultural nuances of diverse understandings and experiences of the phenomenon of teacher leadership evident in the data are generated via mapping conceptions of teacher leadership in each of the nine categories of description back to respondents’ geographical regions of origin. Implications of the findings are then discussed with a view to promoting more culturally inclusive and diverse conceptions of teacher leadership among the ISTL team and, potentially, the broader teacher leadership research community. We conclude the chapter by reiterating how these findings provide points of departure for building a shared understandings of teacher leadership among the ISTL team as well as learning from differences in these understandings. We also include a brief discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study and the extent to which the findings can serve as an experiential framework for thinking about cross-cultural understandings of teacher leadership among teacher leadership researchers.

Related Literature

It is widely accepted by scholars in various fields or specializations of educational leadership that, when viewed through a sociocultural lens, leadership – including teacher leadership – is a culturally mediated endeavor (Hallinger & Walker, 2011; Hallinger, 2011, 2018; Rogoff, 2003), whereby “individual views about educational success [and leadership] are shaped by personal sociocultural and linguistic experiences” (Ylimaki et al., 2017, p. 75). Thus, educational leaders’ understandings and practices of leadership develop from the cultural traditions of their local communities, and notions of what constitutes effective leadership are context-specific and subject to cultural bias (Okoko, 2018; Rogoff, 2003; van Emmerick et al., 2008). Notwithstanding this key point, it is also well accepted that globalization and the resulting internationalization of education are facilitating the cross-fertilization and exchange of new ideas and new ways of thinking, increasing adoption and hybridization (Bottery, 2006; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Litz, 2011).

However, teacher leadership research has been criticized for failing to adequately conceptualize teacher leadership as being situated in and subordinate to sociocultural communities beyond the school setting – that is, beyond the school as an organization and the school community or district (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Hallinger & Walker, 2011). These broader social and cultural contexts include, for example, nation states and their cultural, economic, and political contexts and histories (Dimmock & Walker, 2010; Hallinger, 2018); globalized cultural communities (Litz, 2011); and the macro context of society more broadly seen from a sociological perspective (Ylimaki et al., 2017). Dimmock and Walker (2005) elaborated this critique further, asserting that:

... understandings of and the meanings associated with leadership across, and indeed within, different societal and cultural contexts, are prone to superficial comparisons as apparently similar policies and practices are widely adopted in different countries. In particular, such comparisons, we claim, can be fatuous and misleading without thorough understanding of the contexts, histories and cultures within which they have developed (p. 21).

More recently, the findings of Nguyen et al.’s (2019) review of empirical studies of teacher leadership support this critique. They found that the key factors influencing teacher leadership reported in this literature were “school culture, school structure, principal leadership, peer relationships and person-specific factors” (p. 68). They further noted that the studies included in the review were those that had used one or more of “teacher leadership,” “teacher leader,” or “teacher leaders” (p. 72) in their articles. Studies investigating perspectives and practices of educational leadership relevant to teacher leadership that did not use these specific terms (either in English or as translated from an article published in another language) were not included and are therefore not represented in the findings. Among their recommendations for future research, two are particularly relevant to our study and the work of the ISTL research team: more studies investigating indigenous teacher leadership models and practices in non-Western countries; and a stronger focus on “defining the core theoretical dimensions of teacher leadership” (Nguyen et al., 2019, p. 73).

Hallinger (2018) seeks to contribute to “framing the challenge faced by the field of education leadership and management in developing a global knowledge base that takes account of the diversity of contexts in which school leaders practice” (p. 6). His conceptual article on the contexts of school leadership takes a refreshing look at how factors in economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts – labeled earlier by Leithwood as “widely-shared contexts” (cited in Hallinger, 2018, p. 18) – influence school leadership. Hallinger (2018) noted that reference to these broader contexts of teacher leadership – such as national culture, for example – really only came to prominence with Hofstede’s framework of national culture. Inspired by this framework and the work of other scholars in the field interested in exploring these “widely-shared contexts” of educational leadership, Hallinger (2018, pp. 11-12) concluded that it was being recognized that “in order to achieve results, leaders must adapt their leadership styles in ways that are consonant with the prevailing values and norms in their different socio-cultural contexts” and that as researchers, we need to “build our knowledge base from data gathered in a more diverse set of national social contexts.” It is this latter agenda to which this study seeks to contribute.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws its theoretical underpinnings from sociocultural theory of human development (Rogoff, 2003) as it is applied to leadership and specifically educational leadership and, by extension, teacher leadership. Drawing on Vygotskian sociocultural historical theory to inform her theorizing about the cultural nature of human development, Rogoff’s (2003, p. 168) central premise is that “humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities, which also change.” Adopting this sociocultural lens leads to a number of propositions underpinned by guiding assumptions and beliefs about the nature of educational leadership and teacher leadership that are important for this study. These fundamental propositions are now outlined and connections with sociocultural perspectives in the teacher leadership literature are highlighted:

Proposition 1: Teacher leadership, as a form of educational leadership, is a socio-cultural construct emerging from and situated within the ideas and practices of cultural communities (Rogoff, 2003). Dimmock and Walker (2005, p. 21) concur, asserting that “culture is a significant influence on school leadership in and within different societies.”

Proposition 2: “Cultural differences are generally variations on themes of universal import [such as education and child-rearing], with different emphasis or value placed on particular practices rather than all-or-none differences” (Rogoff, p. 64). Thus, the idea of teacher leadership can be seen as a cultural variation of educational leadership as a global “theme of universal import” (Rogoff, p. 64). From this perspective, understanding cultural variation becomes central to

understanding and theorizing about the nature of educational leadership, and concomitantly, teacher leadership. Dimmock and Walker (2005, p. 21) agreed, stating that the field of teacher leadership “looks to societal culture for at least partial explanations of school leaders’ behaviors and actions.”

Proposition 3: These cultural ideas and practices “[r]elate to broad historical patterns (such as industrialization and bureaucratic organization, and other historical changes),” to “cultural variation in goals of [human] development” and to the “[p]atterns of cultural processes – the cultural ways in which people can organize their way of life” (Rogoff, pp. 23, 166). Teacher leadership as a form of educational leadership is concerned with human development goals and priorities, such as and especially related to the goals and practices of child-rearing (Rogoff, 2003) and therefore also – but not exclusively – to processes of school and community leadership and organization. Drawing on Hofstede (1991), Dimmock and Walker (2005) elaborated on the relationship between societal and organizational culture:

Qualitative differences between organizational and societal culture stem from the fact that societal cultures differ mostly at the level of basic values, while organizational cultures differ mostly at the level of more superficial practices, as reflected in the recognition of particular symbols, heroes and rituals (Hofstede, 1991). This allows organizational cultures to be managed and changed, whereas societal cultures are more enduring and change only gradually over long time periods, if at all (Dimmock & Walker, 2005, p. 32).

Proposition 4: “To continue to function, a community adapts with changing times, experimenting with and resisting new ideas in ways that maintain core values while learning from changes that are desired or required” (Rogoff, pp. 81–91). Thus, as noted by Litz (2011, p. 52), ideas of teacher leadership are subject to both “cultural globalization” (an increased cultural diversity of perspectives) and “cultural standardization ... where the ideas, values and practices of a dominant culture permeate other cultures, resulting in “cultural uniformity.” Dimmock and Walker (2005, p. 21) refer to this as the “educational phenomenon of internationalism” which they say is both “desirable and largely inescapable.”

Proposition 5: “The process of trying to understand other people is essential for...scholarly work” (Rogoff, p. 30). Thus, “the creative process of learning from cultural variation” (p. 162) in understandings and practices of teacher leadership has intrinsic value for educational researchers and practitioners interested in teacher leadership as well as potential extrinsic value in terms of contributing to knowledge in the field. This point has also been noted by teacher leadership scholars, including Dimmock and Walker (2005), Hallinger (2018), and Hallinger and Kantamara (2000). The central premise of this last proposition is elaborated for the purposes of this study with reference to how a group of teacher leadership researchers from diverse geographical and sociocultural communities engaged in just such a “creative process of learning from cultural variation” (Rogoff, p. 162) in order to develop shared understandings of their research object and territory (Pham et al. 2005) – teacher leadership, and teacher leadership research respectively – by participating in this phenomenographic study.

Methodology

The study's qualitative methodology is now outlined, where individual, semi-structured, online interviews were used in combination with participants' mind maps of teacher leadership to explore a range of qualitatively different ways that the participants related with this phenomenon. The description includes sampling, data collection methods, and the analytical framework guiding the procedures for analysis and interpretation of the data to: (i) elicit participants' ways of experiencing (or conceptions) of teacher leadership; (ii) identify and analyze significant variations in these conceptions at the collective level; and (iii) to identify the dimensions of variation and structural relationships among conceptions in order to generate the phenomenographic outcome space: a set of nine discrete, structurally related and qualitatively distinct conceptions of teacher leadership across three broad domains.

Design and Methods

Phenomenography (Marton & Booth, 1997) was selected as the most suitable approach to investigate variation in the ways that the members of the ISTL research team, as the study's participants, relate with the phenomenon of interest, teacher leadership. As noted by Willis (2018, p. 3), "the potential risks associated with the imposition of foreign paradigms in cross-cultural research can be significantly minimized through the use of a phenomenographic methodology" that "gives primacy to the variations of participants' experiences." Phenomenography is a qualitative research approach reflecting a "broadly interpretive epistemological orientation" (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 2) with links to sociocultural, social constructivist, and situated cognitivist epistemologies (Booth, 2008). Thus, phenomenographic researchers "maintain an epistemological perspective that concentrates on the *what* of thinking, the meaning people ascribe to what they experience" (Barnard et al., 1999, p. 219, emphasis in original). In line with the aim of discovering variations (differences), rather than commonalities (Marton, 1988), in ways of understanding and experiencing teacher leadership, purposive sampling of the full membership of the ISTL research team (i.e., all 20 team members from all 10 countries) was aimed for to maximize heterogeneity (Akerlind, 2012) (in this case, cultural, gender and geographical diversity) of the sample. After obtaining university ethics clearance, all 20 members of the research team were invited to participate in the study. Twelve of these 20, representing all 10 countries of origin of the team's membership at the time of the study, agreed to participate in the research. The countries represented in the findings include, in alphabetical order, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, Spain, South Africa, Tanzania, and Turkey, comprising five female and seven male members of the ISTL team. Further details of the participating team members are withheld to maintain participants' anonymity. The two co-researchers who conducted the study – one located in Canada and one in

Australia – are also ISTL team members and experienced educational researchers with expertise in phenomenological and phenomenographic research, one with experience in teacher leadership research and the other in the field of adult and professional education. Both co-researchers are multilingual and have experience living and working with participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Analytical Framework

The central unit of analysis and description in phenomenographic studies is the “conception” or “way of experiencing” the phenomenon and is inclusive of meanings, understandings, experiences, and perspectives the participants ascribe to the phenomenon (Barnard et al., 1999) – in this study, the phenomenon of teacher leadership. For the purposes of analysis, a way of experiencing something is comprised of a *referential* and a *structural* component, which are said to be co-constitutive and “dialectically intertwined” (Akerlind, 2005 p. 70). The referential component refers to the meaning that the phenomenon has for the subject (e.g., its significance and value) (Bruce, 1990), and the structural component “describes how relevant parts of the world are seen and are related” with reference to:

- (i) What is thematized or focal in [the participant’s] awareness.
- (ii) What is at the margin of awareness or in the ground.
- (iii) How the subject delimits or discerns the object from its context (Bruce, 1990, p. 6).

Figure 3.1 illustrates the application of these concepts to the analytical framework for the ISTL study, adapted from Pham et al., (2005).

Data Collection

Consistent with the kinds of data collection techniques traditionally used in phenomenographic research (Marton, 1988; Sin, 2010), individual, semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants’ conceptions and experiences of teacher leadership. A one-hour online interview was conducted with each participant using videoconferencing technology, with interviews video-recorded for later analysis. Participants were also asked to complete a pre-interview mind-mapping activity (Arden 2016; Buzan & Buzan, 2003) in which they graphically mapped their responses to the question: *What does “teacher leadership” mean to you?* Each participant completed and emailed his or her mind map to the researchers prior to the interview so that they could be printed out by the researchers for use during the interview, for reference, and for the purposes of annotation. Both co-researchers conducted the interviews together, alternating between the roles of lead interviewer and supporting interviewer. Prior to being used for the study, the interview protocol,

Referential and structural components of awareness

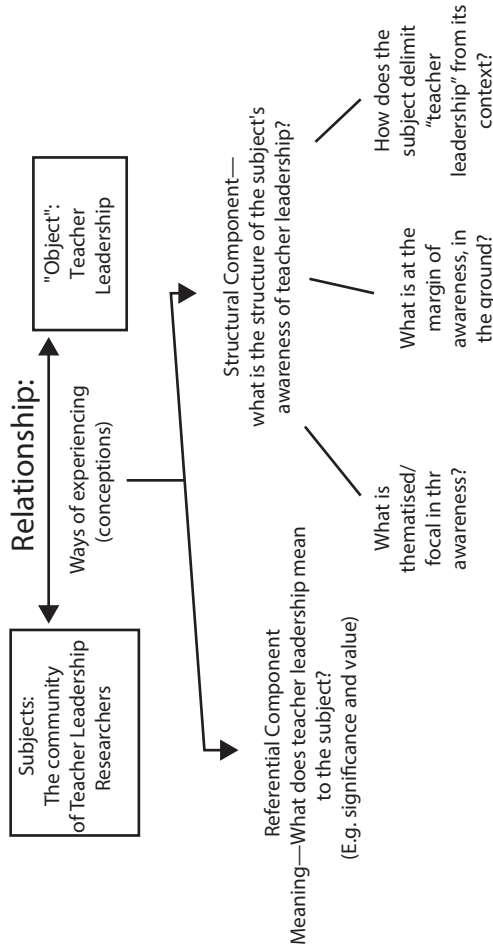


Fig. 3.1 The experience of teacher leadership as a relational phenomenon showing referential and structural components of awareness. (Adapted from Pham et al., 2005)

including both the online interview and mind mapping components, was piloted by the researchers with the principal researcher's academic colleague with a background in teacher leadership. The data from the pilot interview were not included in the study's findings.

Participants' mind maps were used as the point of departure for the interview, where they (participants) were asked to "talk through" (describe and explain) their mind maps of teacher leadership, starting at any point. The lead interviewer took responsibility for guiding the interview process and where necessary, redirecting the participant back to their mind map, while the supporting interviewer would focus on notetaking and asking probe questions to interrogate different aspects of participants' awareness, understandings, and experiences of teacher leadership illustrated in the analytical framework in Fig. 3.1. As each participant talked through his or her mind map during their interview, the interviewers annotated their copies of the participant's mind map, noting critical, verbatim utterances on the relevant sections of the mind map and taking other notes for later reference. Using this procedure allowed participants to talk freely about their own ways of experiencing teacher leadership without having to be guided by a priori concepts and constructs inherent in structured interview questions, thus minimizing the interviewers' influence on the interviewees' thinking and thereby helping to maximize the trustworthiness of the data gathered (Arden, 2016; Collier-Reed et al., 2009). Figure 3.2 is an example of one participant's mind map of teacher leadership.

Departing from common practice in other qualitative research approaches, there is no member-checking of results with participants in phenomenographic studies. The trustworthiness of phenomenographic findings rests on a combination of (a) the quality of the data collection and analysis frameworks, instruments, and procedures used; (b) the researchers' fidelity to the tenets of the phenomenographic approach and her integrity, open-mindedness, and interpretive awareness during data collection and analysis; and (c) the quality of the findings. Criteria for judging the quality of the findings of a phenomenographic study include the distinctiveness and parsimony of the outcome space, the logical and inclusive relationships between the different ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question in each category, and also that they "should be complete in the sense that nothing in the collective experience as manifested in the population under investigation is left unspoken" (Marton & Booth 1997, p. 125).

Phenomenographic Data Analysis

The artifacts from the interviews included interview recordings, participants' original mind maps along with those annotated by the researchers and other researcher notes. These artifacts were then subject to analysis following a systematic phenomenographic analysis procedure that had been tested and refined as part of the pilot process. The data analysis procedure comprised of the following four broad stages:

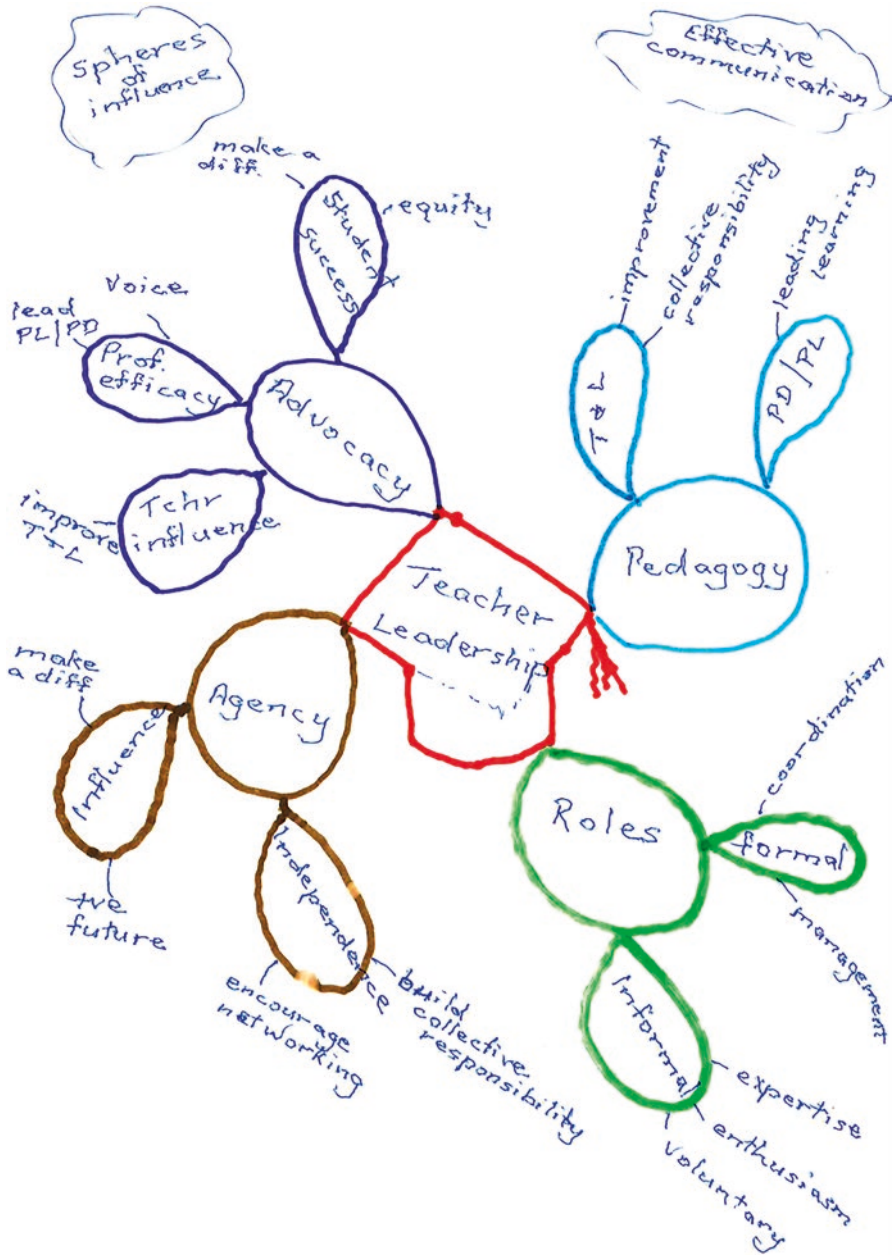


Fig. 3.2 One participant's mind map of teacher leadership. (Used with permission)

Stage 1: Focus on Individuals to Identify Discrete Ways of Experiencing Teacher Leadership Evident in the Interview Data

Immediately on conclusion of each individual interview, the researchers would sit and work independently on the first stage of the phenomenographic data analysis process to identify discrete and significant conceptions of teacher leadership reflected in the data from the interview. To support this process, the researchers independently completed a data analysis template (Arden, 2016) (see [Appendix](#)) designed to guide and document the identification of referential components of awareness (the *meanings* of teacher leadership evident in the data) and then the structural components (the *structure of the participant's awareness* of teacher leadership evident in the data). On completing this first step individually, the two researchers would then share their completed data analysis templates via email and discuss their findings in a zoom meeting to check their interpretations. An important part of this first step was to validate the discrete meanings of teacher leadership identified in the data using the structure of the individual's awareness of teacher leadership (structural components), as recommended by Cope (2004) and elaborated in Fig. 3.1.

Stage 2: Moving Focus Away from Individuals to Sorting of Data Extracts Into “Pools of Meanings”

On completion of the Stage 1 data analysis for the first six interviews, the researchers moved to Stage 2, moving backwards and forwards between individual interviews and the identified collective meaning units, and progressively sorting data extracts into discrete “pools of meaning” that appeared to reflect significant variation (Marton, 1988, p. 198) in ways of experiencing teacher leadership. This required the researchers intentionally and deliberately to: (i) move away from a focus on individuals to “meanings” identified in Stage 1; (ii) focus on identifying significant variation in meanings rather than commonality; and (iii) continue to validate interpretations of the identified discrete “ways of experiencing” teacher leadership evident in the data with reference to both the referential and structural components of awareness in the analytical framework. The process of moving focus away from individuals to meanings and from commonality to variation was almost counter-intuitive, and required strong intentionality, discipline, and vigilance on the part of the researchers.

Stage 3: Identifying Dimensions of Variation and Forming Tentative Categories of Description

The researchers then worked with the pools of meaning from the first six interviews to identify dimensions of variation that helped to characterize and differentiate the ways of experiencing teacher leadership in each case. Dimensions of variation are

dimensions that run as threads across the different ways of experiencing reflected in each category (Pang, 2003) and serve to illustrate the ways in which the experiences of teacher leadership vary. The preliminary dimensions of variation emerging during the Stage 2 analysis of the first six interviews are presented in Table 3.1.

As shown in Table 3.1, key dimensions of variation began to emerge characterized by five questions that served to differentiate ways of experiencing teacher leadership evident in the data. The first dimension of variation was relatively easy to identify: what form does teacher leadership take in the way it is experienced? Is it an idea/construct/abstraction? Is it an act, or process? Is it an ideal or value? Other dimensions of variation related to the nature of the influence or desired change being sought in a particular way of experiencing teacher leadership. Is this desired change related to a pedagogical innovation, teachers' work, a political change? By whom is this change or influence recognized, and who benefits, or whose interests are being served? Another dimension of variation that could be identified related to the structure of awareness of teacher leadership, and specifically, to how "teacher leadership" is delimited from its context (see Fig. 3.1), referred to in Table 3.1 as a teacher leadership "domain": Is the particular experience of teacher leadership in a particular category situated in the context of the "classroom"? Of the school as an organization? Of the profession or teachers' work? Or even in the broader community or national, geopolitical context?

Having completed the above steps, the researchers were able to identify and characterize the eight distinctively different conceptions of teacher leadership shown in Fig. 3.3. Each of these initial eight different ways of experiencing teacher leadership was given a label designed to reflect the distinctive meaning of that particular conception of teacher leadership in a way that would hopefully make sense to others, which is referred to in the literature as communicative validity (Akerlind, 2012). Representative quotations from the interviews capturing the particular way

Table 3.1 Tentative dimensions of variation based on first six interviews

| Dimensions of variation | Variations |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What <i>form</i> does teacher leadership take in the way it is experienced in each category? | Idea/construct/abstraction, process, act, ideal, conviction/ Mission/value, philosophy, individual person/human? |
| What is the <i>leadership domain</i> in each category? | Personal, profession, academy, school, (formal) education system, classroom, community, geopolitical, social, teachers' work? |
| What is the <i>nature of the desired change/influence</i> sought in the way TL is experienced in each category? | Curriculum innovation, pedagogical innovation, cultural change, school improvement, legitimise/valorise teaching profession, social justice, personal development, political change, new research agenda? |
| How or by whom is this <i>influence acknowledged/recognised</i> ? | Peers (teachers), education system, broader community, academy, government? |
| "Making a difference" – For whom? Cui bono (who benefits? <i>Whose interests are served</i> ?) | Students, teachers, the teaching profession, the school, society? |

From Arden and Okoko (2019a)

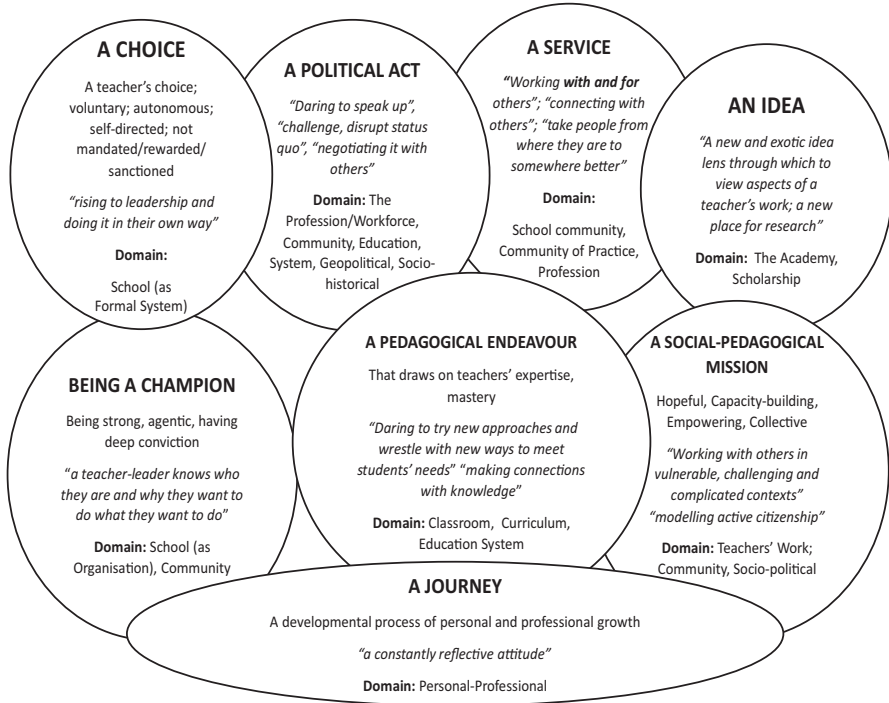


Fig. 3.3 From pools of meaning to tentative categories of description. (From Arden & Okoko, 2019a)

of experiencing teacher leadership were provided for each conception. These preliminary findings emerging from the analysis of the first six interviews (representing data collected from ISTL members from Australia, Romania, South Africa, Mexico, Tanzania, and Canada) were shared with the research team and delegates at an international conference (Arden & Okoko, 2019a), serving as an initial test of their communicative validity.

Stage 4: Consolidation of Categories and Construction of the Outcome Space

Following the conference, a further six interviews were conducted with ISTL team members from China, Canada, Turkey, Tanzania, Spain, and Colombia, with interview artifacts analyzed following Stage 1 of the data analysis process, but this time incorporating the data from the second lot of interviews into a revisiting of Steps 2 and 3. This resulted in reconfiguration and further refinement of the initial eight conceptions along with the identification of a ninth conception. Further work on data analysis and interpretation was completed to elaborate dimensions of variation, after which the researchers were able to formalize a stable system of meanings

(Marton and Booth, 1997) into nine categories of description, supported by selected extracts from the data and validated with reference to the distinctive meanings, structure of awareness and dimensions of variation. These findings, which include detailed tables elaborating the dimensions of variation used to differentiate the nine ways of experiencing teacher leadership, were subsequently shared with the ISTL team members via an unpublished written report and zoom presentation (Arden & Okoko, 2019b–2020). The final step in the phenomenographic analysis process – construction of the outcome space – was then completed and presented as part of an ISTL Teacher Leadership Symposium (Okoko & Arden, 2020). These findings are now presented in the following section, beginning with a description of the conception/way of experiencing teacher leadership in each of the nine categories supported with quotations from the interviews.

Findings

The findings are representative of the set of significant variations in the ways that the participants experienced the phenomenon of teacher leadership, at the collective level, at the time of the study. The conception or way of experiencing in any one category does not necessarily represent one individual participant researcher's way of experiencing teacher leadership; rather, different conceptions and ways of experiencing teacher leadership are evident in different participants' perspectives and understandings across the whole sample. The following nine qualitatively different conceptions of teacher leadership were identified as a result of Steps 1-3 of the phenomenographic data analysis process:

1. Leading the school (the *organizational* conception).
2. Leading by choice (the *informal* conception).
3. Leading pedagogical innovation (the *pedagogical* conception).
4. Leading with and for others (the *collaborative-enabling* conception).
5. Leading for the right reasons (the *ideal/ethical* conception).
6. Leading as a life's work (the *vocational* conception).
7. Leading generative social change (the *social pedagogical* conception).
8. Leading system change (the *political* conception).
9. Leading thinking (the *academic* conception).

Descriptions of the way of experiencing teacher leadership in each category are now presented, supported with quotations from the interviews. As illustrated in the study's analytical framework in Fig. 3.1, the way of experiencing teacher leadership in each category is constituted by a referential component (what the experience of teacher leadership means in this conception) and a structural component (the structure of awareness of teacher leadership) in that category.

Category 1: Leading the School (the Organizational Conception)

In this category, teacher leadership is experienced as leading the school and corresponds with the conception labeled “Being a Champion” in the preliminary findings in Fig. 3.3. Focal in awareness in this way of experiencing teacher leadership is the teacher-leader’s agency as an influential leader in the context of the school as an organization, the broader school community, and the formal education system:

Promote school goals.

How you steer the direction of your school.

Being able to navigate and steer the ship.

How you influence the development of the school culture.

Seen from this perspective, teacher leadership is personified, inhabited by the individual teacher-leader who is strong, decisive, “prone to action and accountable to the school community.”

The significance and value of teacher leadership lie in being a strong and effective leader, able to “inspire others” and “leaving behind a legacy” of positive change: “There needs to be a hard edge to the thing in practice...you can’t be a windmill.”

Category 2: Leading by Choice (the Informal Conception)

Corresponding with the conception of teacher leadership as “A Choice” in Fig. 3.3, teacher leadership in this category is experienced as a teacher’s choice; a voluntary decision taken to enact leadership in relation to a particular change or improvement goal, project or initiative in the teacher-leader’s own way and on their own terms:

Rising to leadership and doing it in their own way.

Focal in awareness is again the teacher-leader’s agency. However, in this conception, leadership is experienced as being neither formally sanctioned nor formally recognized within the system or hierarchy of the school as an organization, but:

Emerges in the willingness of teachers to go beyond what is expected or mandated.

A willingness and capacity to discern the less obvious...what’s happening in the informal dimension.

From the heart; not from authority.

Should be more about inferential power than positional power.

Thus, in this way of experiencing teacher leadership, a teacher-leader’s influence does not come from positional power. Moreover, formal recognition of leadership is seen as being counterproductive, working against the teacher-leader’s ability to

exercise their leadership, with those who receive formal recognition as leaders at risk of being “*absorbed into the system and lose[ing] track of what they were trying to do.*”

Category 3: Leading Pedagogical Innovation (the Pedagogical Conception)

Corresponding with the conception of teacher leadership in Fig. 3.3 labeled “A Pedagogical Endeavour,” the experience of teacher leadership in this conception is of leading pedagogical innovation, expressed as:

Going beyond day-to-day teaching.

Daring to try new approaches and wrestle with new ways to meet students’ needs.

As is the case in the conceptions in categories 1 and 2, the individual teacher-leader’s agency and willingness to go above and beyond are focal in awareness in this way of experiencing teacher leadership. However, in this conception, the significance and value of teacher leadership are seen as the teacher-leader drawing on his or her acknowledged expertise as a pedagogue to lead curriculum and/or pedagogical innovation or excellence through experimentation and building connections with knowledge:

Building connections with knowledge.

Experimentation”; “Excellence.

A teacher-leader should be an expert in their subject or provide educational leadership in a particular area.

Category 4: Leading with and for Others (the Collaborative-Enabling Conception)

In this category, labeled in the preliminary findings in Fig. 3.3 as “A Service,” teacher leadership is experienced as a collaborative endeavor in the context of teachers’ collegial work to “*take people from where they are to somewhere better.*” Focal in awareness is the teacher-leader’s ability to forge connections with others, facilitate communication and collaboration, and enable shared leadership:

Working with and for others.

Encouraging others.

Working in partnership with parents.

Students as allies.

Build collective responsibility.

As a teacher-leader, you have an obligation to engage with development of a generation of knowledge that enables and allows people to practice their profession nobly.

While incorporating the notion of “service,” the significance and value of teacher leadership in this conception lie in collaborating with others to help them achieve their desired and shared goals and thus reciprocity is evident:

Good colleagues help each other out.

Letting others lead you...you cannot be a leader if you are not humble and open to learn from others.

Category 5: Leading for the Right Reasons (the Ideal Conception)

The emphasis in this way of experiencing teacher leadership is on the motivations and ethical qualities of the teacher leader more so than the activity of leading and its purpose or end goals:

Effort guided by a deep moral conviction and an ethical mindset.

Doing things for the right reasons.

Being transparent.

Teacher leadership in this conception is underpinned the teacher-leader’s qualities of self-awareness, authenticity, and reflexivity:

A teacher-leader knows who they are and why they want to do what they want to do.

An ability to witness... to respond in front of others.

Strong sense of self-awareness.

Teacher leaders must understand who they are in the context they are working in.

The significance and value of teacher leadership in this conception thus lie in its ethical dimensions rather than in outcomes or achievements. This conception emerged as a distinctive way of experiencing teacher leadership during iterative analysis of artifacts from all 12 interviews and does not appear in the preliminary findings shown in Fig. 3.3.

Category 6: Leading as a Life’s Work (the Vocational Conception)

Initially labeled “A Journey” in the preliminary findings in Fig. 3.3, in this category, teacher leadership is experienced as a journey of personal and professional growth, change, and development over time:

Learning to change, adapt.

A constantly reflective attitude.

Focal in awareness are the rapidly changing contexts and conditions of teachers' work and a recognition that there are no simple, "one size fits all" solutions to the complex challenges facing teacher-leaders:

How do teacher-leaders know who they are in this context?

Reflection and self-analysis...cognitive dissonance... questioning values, assumptions, beliefs, understanding.

The significance and value of teacher leadership in this category lie in commitment to resolving personal and professional contradictions of being a teacher-leader:

Struggling to resolve the personal and professional contradictions; finding your place.

Category 7: Leading "Generative Social Change" (the Social Pedagogical Conception)

In this category, teacher leadership is experienced as leading "*generative social change*." Teacher leadership is more than just being a good teacher and should:

Go beyond the classroom; go to families.

Invite other teachers to become involved in students' lives.

As such, the teacher-leader is a social activist and social pedagogue, "*working with others in vulnerable, challenging and complicated contexts*" in the interests of addressing social disadvantage and inequality:

Make positive changes in students' learning and in their lives.

Develop solutions to problems.

Develop the capacity for critical thinking about societal problems.

By God, you'd better understand that as a teacher, you are preparing students to thrive in the context in which they live.

Teacher leadership is hopeful, requiring a collective effort from teachers, students, parents, and community members and, as such, dependent on a teacher leader's strong "*sense of mission*" in "*reaching out*" and "*changing lives*" for the better. Shown in Fig. 3.3 as "a social-pedagogical mission" (Arden & Okoko, 2019a), this way of experiencing teacher leadership emerged initially from the analysis of the first six interviews and was further consolidated in subsequent analysis of the latter six.

Category 8: Leading System Change (the Political Conception)

Initially labeled as “A Political Act” in the preliminary findings in Fig. 3.3, the experience of teacher leadership in this category is leading system change in the interests of promoting the teaching profession, specifically the status and influence of teachers in society:

Teachers raise their voices and take their concerns to the policy-makers.

Voice for the profession.

Daring to speak up.

Challenge, mobilize, [and] disrupt [the] status quo.

There is an awareness of teacher leadership as a struggle against entrenched systems and policies that serve to perpetuate social disadvantage as well as poor working conditions for teachers:

Concerns about the situations of teachers in my country...their safety.

Staff wellbeing...teacher wellbeing.

There is also a sense that these conditions work against the emergence of newer understandings and practices of teacher leadership:

Teachers do not recognize themselves as leaders.

Obstacles...roadblocks...

Teacher leadership expressed is influential... [but there is] a lack of political engagement in my country...in the arrangement of power and resources.

The image of teachers is battered...there is suspicion and a lack of trust.

There is a diminished view of teacher leadership...teachers don't have influence.

In this conception, the teacher-leader is an animator and political activist in the struggle against perceived system oppression, negative societal perceptions of teachers, and the poor status of the teaching profession.

Category 9: Leading Thinking (the Academic Conception)

This way of experiencing teacher leadership emerged initially from the analysis of the first six interviews as “An Idea” (see Fig. 3.3) and was further consolidated in subsequent analysis of the latter six. In this category, teacher leadership is experienced as something new:

New and exotic idea.

Lens through which to view aspects of a teacher's work.

This conception of teacher leadership is situated in the context of the academy and global scholarship. Focal in awareness is that teacher leadership is “*a borrowed construct*” that provides both “*a new place for research*” and a challenge in terms of “*trying to make it work for our context*”:

Everything is new here which is great for me as I can work on it.

As such, teacher leadership – as an idea – provides a platform for researchers to lead new ways of thinking about teachers’ work that challenge “*old ideas*” and “*critique the discourse*” of educational leadership:

Educational leadership in my country has been conceptualized as top-down and hierarchical...teacher leadership turns that on its head.

What are the conditions for teachers that promote teacher leadership?

Dimensions of Variation in the Collective Experience of Teacher Leadership

The collective experience of teacher leadership among the participant group is constituted by significant variations that emerge from a foundation of threads that are common. These common threads lie across three interrelated dimensions: the *referential* dimension, which refers to the meaning of teacher leadership – what it means, what form it takes (including what kind or type of leadership is reflected); the *structural* dimension, which refers to which aspect or aspects of teacher leadership are focal in awareness and how teacher leadership is delimited from its context; and the *teleological* dimension, which refers to the nature of the positive change or influence sought. These common threads that characterize the collective experience of teacher leadership also serve to characterize the significant variation in these experiences, as shown in Table 3.2.

As shown in Table 3.2, the teleological dimension of the experience of teacher leadership as influencing positive change of some kind is a dimension of variation that runs across all conceptions of teacher leadership. Thus, just as aspects of “meaning” and “awareness” are co-constitutive of a conception or way of experiencing any phenomenon (as illustrated in the analytical framework), the findings suggest that the goal of influencing positive change is a constituent element of the experience of teacher leadership.

These findings are now interpreted with reference to the study’s theoretical framework and their implications for the promotion of more culturally inclusive and diverse conceptions of teacher leadership discussed.

Table 3.2 Dimensions of variation in the collective experience of teacher leadership

| Conceptions of Teacher Leadership (TL) | Dimensions of Variation | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Referential – What form does TL take? | Structure of awareness of TL – What aspect of TL is in focus? | Teleological – What is the nature of the positive change/influence sought? |
| Category 1: Leading the school | Organizational leadership | Influence, legacy | Organizational change/school improvement |
| Category 2: Leading by choice | Emergent leadership | Agency | School improvement |
| Category 3: Leading pedagogical innovation | Curriculum/pedagogical leadership/ innovation | Expertise | Curriculum/pedagogical innovation |
| Category 4: Leading with and for others | Collaborative/enabling leadership | Collegiality, service | Generative collective action, collaboration |
| Category 5: Leading for the right reasons | Ethical/moral leadership | Accountability | Formation |
| Category 6: Leading as a life’s work | Vocational/career leadership | Commitment, reflexivity | Personal mastery/ professional growth |
| Category 7: Leading generative social change | Social-pedagogical leadership | Social justice, advocacy | Generative social change |
| Category 8: Leading system change | Political leadership | Activism, advocacy | Disruption, system change |
| Category 9: Leading thinking about teacher leadership | Thought leadership | TL research | Transformation (new ways of thinking about TL) |

Outcome Space: Cross-Cultural Contexts of Teacher Leadership across Teacher Leadership Domains

Further analysis of the structural components of the conceptions of teacher leadership in the above nine categories of description reveals that they fall into three broad clusters representing three interrelated teacher leadership “domains” in which the experience of teacher leadership is broadly situated, as shown in Fig. 3.4. Detailed tables elaborating the dimensions of variation used to differentiate the nine ways of experiencing teacher leadership provide further supporting evidence for these findings (see Arden & Okoko, 2019b–20).

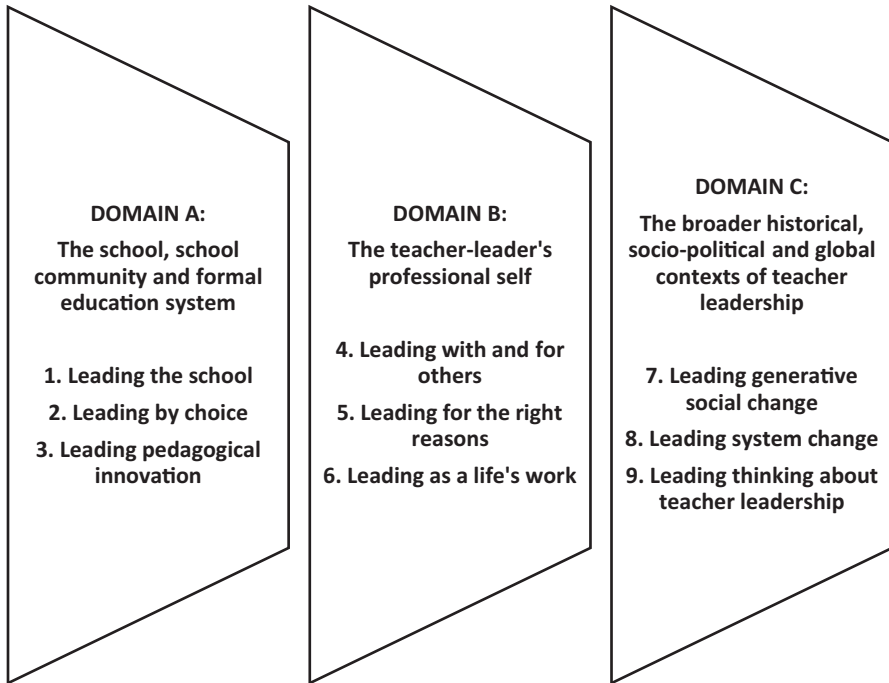


Fig. 3.4 Nine qualitatively different ways of experiencing teacher leadership across three broad, interrelated teacher leadership “domains”

As shown in Fig. 3.4, the conceptions of teacher leadership in the first three categories in Domain A (leading the school; leading by choice; and leading pedagogical innovation) are situated epistemologically in the context of the school, the broader school community, and the formal education system. The teacher-leader’s agency, influence, and – in the case of the *pedagogical* conception – expertise are thematized, enacted within – and in the case of the *informal* conception – even despite the formal organization and system. The teacher leader is seen as a champion, an innovator, and/or an expert, with the nature of the desired change or influence sought being school improvement, pedagogical innovation, and/or student success. Referring to the sociocultural theoretical framework presented earlier in the paper, a link can be made with Proposition 2: that teacher leadership, as a form of educational leadership, is concerned with human development goals and priorities, such as and especially related to the goals and practices of child-rearing (Rogoff, 2003) and therefore also – but not exclusively – to processes of school and community leadership and organization.

In contrast, the conceptions of teacher leadership in Domain B (leading with and for others; leading for the right reasons; and leading as a life’s work) are situated in

the context of the teacher's professional self.¹ Here, it is the teacher-leader's philosophical or ethical orientation and practice that are thematized, with the teacher leader seen as being agentic in addition to collaborative, ethical, and committed to their vocation. The nature of the desired change or influence sought is still positive change, but that is achieved through enabling collective agency, professional learning and development, and personal mastery. Thus, there is a developmental aspect to this way of experiencing teacher leadership that includes an awareness of professional change and growth over time that clearly distinguishes the experience of teacher leadership in this cluster.

Proposition 3 of the theoretical framework is pertinent to what we can understand from these findings about the experience of teacher leadership in the six conceptions in Domains A and B, insofar as "cultural differences are generally variations on themes of universal import... with different emphasis or value placed on particular practices rather than all-or-none differences" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 64). This is evident in the different emphases and value placed on "particular practices" of teacher leadership reflected in the six conceptions in Domains A and B, such as the focus on organizational leadership on the one hand versus leading curriculum and pedagogical innovation or on working collaboratively with others. Returning to Proposition 2 in the theoretical framework, what remains constant across all conceptions in the outcome space is the goal of influencing positive change and development in and through educational leadership.

The experiences of teacher leadership in the three conceptions in Domain C (leading generative social change; leading political change; and leading thinking about teacher leadership) are uniquely situated in a broader frame of the geographical, socio-political, and global contexts of teachers' work, teacher leadership, and educational leadership. In these contexts, the teacher-leader is seen as an activist for social, political, and educational change respectively in the interests of social justice and breaking down what are seen as oppressive and dysfunctional systems that are supported by "old" ways of thinking about education, teachers and teachers' work. Within these "wider shared contexts" (Hallinger, 2018, p. 18), teacher leadership is experienced as a social-pedagogical, socio-political act and, related to this, as a new idea and platform for change. A connection can be made between the findings and the proposition (Proposition 1 in the theoretical framework) that people's conceptions of teacher leadership emerge from their participation in "dynamic cultural communities" that include local, national and global communities "whose cultural practices may overlap or conflict with each other" and are often related to "national and international politics" that are in turn related to development goals and priorities (Rogoff, 2003, pp. 50, 81, 104).

Proposition 4 is also relevant to interpreting the conceptions of teacher leadership in this cluster and is discussed in the following section.

¹The researchers acknowledge the contributions of ISTL team members to the further refinement of this interpretation during a facilitated engagement with the study's findings at an ISTL team meeting held early in 2020.

Interpretations of the Findings, Limitations, and Implications

In attempting to identify cross-cultural implications from these findings, it is critical to highlight three caveats about what this study was not. Firstly, the study did not seek to make claims about how educational leadership, and specifically teacher leadership, is enacted in different countries; rather, the findings are warranted claims about the variation in perspectives and experiences of teacher leadership among a group of researchers located in 10 different countries. As such, the findings reflect the experiences and perspectives of academics who are researching the area of teacher leadership, not of teacher-leaders in schools. Thirdly, as stated previously, the findings of phenomenographic studies report the significant variations in the collective understandings, perspectives, and experiences of the group in relation to the phenomenon under study (in this case, the phenomenon of teacher leadership). Thus, a particular “conception” or “way of experiencing” in any one category does not necessarily represent any one individual respondent’s way of experiencing teacher leadership; rather, different conceptions and ways of experiencing teacher leadership are evident in different respondents’ perspectives and understandings across the whole sample. The findings are thus representative of the set of significant variations in the ways that the participants experience the phenomenon of teacher leadership, at the collective level. Therefore, when reading the findings, participants in this study and readers more generally who are familiar with the field of teacher leadership should be able to see their own meanings reflected in the data in addition to meanings that are new to them. What readers will not see in these findings are individual stories or narratives of teacher leadership.

Having made these points, there are some cross-cultural insights that do emerge when the conceptions in the nine categories are mapped back to individual participants, with some patterns in the outcome space potentially speaking to influences in participants’ different regional geographical contexts. While the conceptions of teacher leadership in Categories 1-6 are to a greater or lesser extent reflected in the variation in ways of experiencing teacher leadership across the whole sample of participants, with no notable variation that can be linked to participants’ particular geographic locations, the conceptions of teacher leadership in the broader historical, socio-political and global contexts of the experience of teacher leadership in Domain C of the outcome space do reveal variation that can be related to different sociocultural contexts:

- The *social-pedagogical* conception of teacher leadership reflected in Category 7 is most strongly associated with participants located in the South American countries and not so in conceptions of teacher leadership reflected among participants located in other countries.
- The conception of *teacher leadership as a political act* in Category 8 is reflected most strongly in the conceptions of participants from South Africa, South American, and Eastern and Central European countries and not in those from Australia, China, Canada, or Tanzania.

- The Academic conception of teacher leadership in Category 9 as “*a new and exotic*” idea is reflected in ways of experiencing teacher leadership among participants located in all countries with the notable exceptions of Canada and Australia.

Proposition 4 in the theoretical framework is relevant to interpretation of these findings: “To continue to function, a community adapts with changing times, experimenting with and resisting new ideas in ways that maintain core values while learning from changes that are desired or required” (Rogoff, pp. 81, 91). It is here that the cultural nuances and differences in the experience of teacher leadership are most evident in the findings, confirming the need among “educationalists” for “deeper appreciation of emerging and alternative models and the increasing complexities of global educational leadership patterns” (Litz, 2011, p. 58). For example, a key finding emerging from the conceptions of teacher leadership in Cluster C is the experience of teacher leadership whereby a teacher’s ability to exercise influence as a teacher leader can be stymied by the low status of the teaching profession, negative societal perceptions of their role and the challenging and difficult social and political conditions of their work. The phenomenographic findings suggest that for these teacher leadership researchers, the “new idea” of teacher leadership reflected in the academic conception in Category 9 presents opportunity for scholarly pursuit and hope for change.

Limitations of the Study

Moving on to consider the study’s limitations, we note that Willis (2018, p. 24) argued that:

...phenomenography is an efficacious methodology for cross-cultural educational research as its methods investigate paradigmatic differences between cultures, give primacy to participants’ experiences, provide scope for the use of local themes and metaphors, and subsequently formulate common language and understandings for both researchers and participants.

However, this claim is predicated on certain assumptions about specific aspects of data collection, such as, for example, the use of questions that probe concrete, lived experience and not merely declarative knowledge about the phenomenon in question. In this study, it is noted that the preliminary mind-mapping activity is likely to have generated what is predominantly declarative knowledge – that is, what the researchers wanted to “show and tell” to others about their understandings and perspectives of teacher leadership. For a group of teacher leadership researchers, it is reasonable to conclude that these understandings and perspectives may, but do not necessarily, reflect concrete experiences of teacher leadership in schools. In fact, they could well be more likely to reflect understandings and perspectives gained through the conduct of research into teacher leadership, thus reflecting a blend of ideas gleaned from the teacher leadership literature with empirical data from studies

conducted with teachers in schools. This is likely to have resulted in this study in the privileging of understandings that are less grounded in primary experience of teacher leadership and more grounded in secondary experience and theory. Having said this, the probing that occurred during the interviews did result in generating perspectives that were more grounded in participants' concrete experiences – albeit their experiences as teacher leadership researchers, and not necessarily as practicing teachers.

Implications

The findings of this study are presented as a useful starting point in the quest to illuminate, and potentially go some way toward eliminating, the “blind spot” in the empirical study of educational leadership purported by Hallinger and Walker (2011, p. 299). They also have implications for the work of the ISTL team. As teacher leadership researchers, we must question our assumptions about the cross-cultural nature of teacher leadership, particularly the assumption that cultural understandings are primarily or exclusively “local understandings.” It is clear that Western notions of teacher leadership have influenced and will continue to influence thinking and that such thinking, in turn, will inform and be informed by policy and practice in different sociocultural contexts. Secondly, the findings provide some evidence that the work of the ISTL team has the potential for significant research impact in members' contexts as they grapple with the challenges and opportunities afforded by new ideas generated through their cross-cultural research.

The findings provide a foundation of shared understandings as well as an opportunity to learn from differences in understanding that serve as an “experiential framework” (Pham et al., 2005, p. 220) for thinking about teacher leadership, potentially encouraging more inclusive, more complete and richer understandings of the phenomenon. We have learned that there are important differences in understandings and experiences of teacher leadership among members of the ISTL team based on geographical context, but that at the same time, there is significant commonality in understandings across contexts. We have learned that Western notions of teacher leadership have clearly influenced thinking among researchers in other parts of the world, but that at the same time, these new ideas and the opportunities they provide for generative social change are being welcomed by scholars. We have come closer to a better understanding of how others see and experience teacher leadership and teacher leadership research, so that our own understanding of both the research “object” (teacher leadership) and the research “territory” (teacher leadership research) is enhanced (Pham et al. 2005, p. 2).

In conclusion, we propose that the phenomenographic study affords a different kind of engagement on the part of readers with the findings; a kind of naturalistic generalization whereby ISTL researchers and readers familiar with the field of teacher leadership should be able to recognize their own conceptions and ways of experiencing teacher leadership in the data in addition to meanings and perspectives

that are new to them, that will perhaps prompt further inquiry. In the words of Rogoff (2003, p. 11), “Culture isn’t just what other people do...The practices of researchers, students, journalists, and professors are cultural, as are the practices of oral historians, midwives and shamans.”

Appendix: Phenomenographic Data Analysis Template (Stage 1 – Focus on Individual Interview Talk and Mind Maps)

| Referential Component (Meaning – Significance and Value) | Structure of Respondent’s Awareness (Focus and Ground/Margin) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Analysis of interview artifacts – Key associations and utterances – What does “teacher leadership” mean to the respondents?</i> | <i>Analysis of interview artifacts – Key associations and utterances - what is the structure of the respondent’s (awareness) which aspects are thematized, focal in awareness? What are the contextual aspects? How does the respondent delimit “teacher leadership” from its context?</i> |
| Key “meaning” utterances in the transcript (including any metaphors used): | Utterances in the transcript that inform about the structure of the respondent’s awareness of teacher leadership: |
| <i>What must teacher Leadership mean to the respondent if they are saying this? What does this tell me about how the respondent sees the significance and value of teacher leadership?</i> | <i>What does this tell me about the structure of the respondent’s awareness of teacher leadership?</i> |
| Additional notes from analysis of mind map (meaning) | Additional notes from mind map (structure of awareness) |
| <i>What does this tell me about how the respondent sees/experiences teacher leadership? (second order perspective)</i> <i>Which “ways of experiencing” teacher leadership are evident in the data? (include quotes/utterances here)</i> | |

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Part II

Contextualizing Teacher Leadership

Exploring and Contextualizing Teacher Leadership

The three chapters in Part I provide a basis for exploring teacher leadership. Chapter 1 describes gaps in knowledge about teacher leadership and highlights the merits of researching teacher leadership. The impact of teacher leaders is shown to influence levels of self-awareness, the learners in teachers' classrooms, and the entire school community. Chapter 2 relates teacher leadership to formal and informal leadership roles, school culture, professional development, and school improvement. It also warns that international dialogue about teacher leadership may lead to uncomfortable questions about the fit of teacher leadership with non-Western educational contexts. Chapter 3 invites readers and researchers to recognize how they bring unique conceptions of teacher leadership and their personal histories of engaging with the concept to their work.

Part II is titled *Conceptualizing Teacher Leadership*. It begins with a review by Achach-Sonda and Cisneros-Cohernour of teacher leadership studies in relation to teaching and learning in Latin America. The authors of Chap. 4 call for more studies of teacher leadership with deeper consideration of context and situationality. Chapter 5, by Pineda-Báez, Fierro-Evans, and Gratacós, offers a closer look at teacher leadership in Spanish-speaking contexts by profiling how teamwork is an essential feature of teacher leadership. The findings of Chap. 5 are based on document analyses using key policy documents from Colombia, Mexico, and Spain.

In Chap. 6, Elmeski, Laouni, and Biqiche juxtapose collaboration and leadership among teachers in Morocco. These authors describe the extent to which collaboration is a component of teachers' professional practice and identify barriers to collaboration such as rigid scheduling and insufficient opportunities for collaboration. In Chap. 7, Webber and Nickel also use document analysis findings to profile the tensions for teacher leaders evident in public documents in Alberta, Canada, that represent the views of the education ministry, school districts, the provincial teachers' union, senior system leaders, and universities. The authors of Chap. 8, van der

Vyver, Fuller, and Khumalo, focus on the power of teacher leadership in post-apartheid South Africa. They identify the challenges of addressing the injustices of the past, describe the attributes and behaviors of teacher leaders in South Africa, and suggest the development of teacher leaders through both pre-service and in-service professional development. In Chap. 9, Moral-Santaella and Sánchez-Lamolda describe a unique teacher leadership-focused approach to initial teacher training in a Spanish university. They describe how their practicum model facilitates instructional skills and knowledge while also contributing to the development of teacher leaders. They caution that there is not widespread recognition of teacher leadership in Spain and that the practicum model elicits both positive reviews and resistance.

In Chap. 10, León Vivas and Gratacós note the value of teacher leadership in relation to school improvement in Argentina. However, they report how the current organization of secondary schools constrains possibilities for sustainable improvements. In particular, they highlight how teachers are contracted on a per course basis and, to make a livable salary, the majority of teachers must work in two to three schools which reduces their opportunities to participate in school-based decision-making. In Chap. 11, Idelcadi, Rguibi, and Bouziane return to a focus on teacher leadership in the Moroccan context. They chronicle the reluctance of many teachers to describe themselves as leaders, although they understand their capacity to exercise influence in their school communities. Participants in this Moroccan study highlighted their need for professional development to help them grow and develop as leaders, plus the importance of supportive school cultures.

Conway and Andrews, in Chap. 12, feature the importance of teacher leaders influencing beyond their classrooms by working collaboratively with principals to improve student learning in Australia. They call the close working relationship between teacher leaders and school principals *parallel leadership for school improvement*. Conway and Andrews stressed the importance of professional trust between teacher leaders and principals in the interest of achieving shared purposes.

Chapter 4

Linking Teacher Leadership to Instruction and Student Learning: A Systematic Review



Leydi Gabriela Achach-Sonda and Edith J. Cisneros-Cohernour

Abstract The aim of this systematic review was to identify the link of teacher leadership to instruction and student learning in both English-speaking countries and Latin America, primarily in elementary education. In conducting the review, we followed the protocol proposed by Newman and Gough (Systematic reviews in educational research. Springer, Wiesbaden, 2020); we analyzed and synthesized the results of 41 empirical articles. The findings indicate that there is a possible link between teacher leadership and instruction when teachers are supported and trained by a teacher leader. In addition, teacher leaders carry out curricular tasks such as creating support materials, specific curriculum, and formative evaluations that facilitate student-centered teaching. Some of these studies show that student knowledge can improve when there was an intervention performed by the teacher leader. More research is needed in Latin America.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Student learning · Teaching improvement · Basic education

This report is based on research done as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. For more information, see the study website: www.mru.ca/istl

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Introduction

Teacher leadership emerged in the 1980s in the United States as part of a set of educational reforms. York-Barr and Duke (2004) defined the concept as “the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Research conducted on teacher leadership has found a positive relationship of teacher leadership with the development of teachers’ professional learning (Godlesky, 2018; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011; Lumpkin et al., 2014). Teacher leadership is also related to the improvement of school results (Cano Flores et al., 2013; González Fernández et al., 2019; Louis et al., 2010; Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Likewise, it is perceived as a benefit for institutions as a factor that increases teachers’ commitment to the school community (Barth, 2011; González Fernández et al., 2019).

It is common to find in the relevant corpus that teacher leaders can have a central role in elevating the quality of teaching and learning at the school because they play the role of change agents (González Fernández et al., 2019; Kenjarski, 2015; Topolinski, 2014). In this role they focus on instruction by: supporting professional learning issues, participating in decision-making, working collaboratively with others, sharing instructional ideas, conducting authentic assessment, and developing continuous training (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011; Kenjarski, 2015; Lumpkin et al., 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Other authors suggested an indirect link between teacher leadership and student learning (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). For example, a body of scholars assure that schools with a specific emphasis on shared leadership endeavors encourage community members to have common goals about learning, so that they could achieve improved student learning outcomes (Cano Flores et al., 2013; González Fernández et al., 2019; Louis et al., 2010; Sun & Leithwood, 2012).

Wenner & Campbell (2017) conducted a systematic review of teacher leadership that included publications from 2004 to 2013. The findings of this review found that none of the studies focused on the effects of teacher leadership on classroom teaching and thereby student learning across various educational levels. This was consistent with earlier reviews by York-Barr & Duke (2004) and Harris (2017), who concluded that although the literature constantly states that there are positive effects of teacher leadership in the classroom, there is little literature showing evidence of such impact, since the studies mainly direct their attention to the consequences on leadership development. In this regard, Wenner & Campbell (2017), Harris (2017), and Nguyen, Harris & Ng (2020) called for more research about the link between teacher leadership and student learning, as well as exploration of how teacher leaders levy the quality of instructional practices.

In relation to the work of Nguyen et al. (2020), this review differs from the work that we present in this chapter in the following aspects (Table 4.1):

Table 4.1 Comparison between Nguyen, Harris & Ng (2020) and the present review

| Comparison criteria | Nguyen, Harris & Ng (2020) | The current review |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) Overall aim | To continue York-Barr and Duke's (2004) review | To link teacher leadership interventions in improving teachers' instructional practices and student learning |
| (2) Specific objectives | To examine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Patterns of leadership research – How research leadership is identified – Evidence on the roles of teacher leaders and how they are enacted – Evidence on factor influencing teacher leadership – Evidence on the impacts of teacher leadership | To examine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Patterns of leadership research – How teacher leadership improves instruction – How student learning is as a result of teacher leadership intervention – Describe the findings of leadership researcher in Latin-American countries |
| (3) Time frame | January 2004 – December 2013 | January 2014 – April 2020 |
| (4) Language | English | English and Spanish |
| (5) Type of publication | Scopus or SSCI (social sciences citation index)-indexed journal articles | Scopus, ERIC, academic search complete, RedALyC |
| (6) Nature of teacher leadership | Within beyond the classroom teaching and leadership are integrated | Teachers maintaining K-12 classroom based-teaching responsibilities and concurrently taking on leadership responsibilities outside of the classroom |
| (7) Research settings | Pre-K-12, K-12 and post-secondary | Elementary school |
| (8) Geographical location | Any | Any with special emphasis in Latin-America |
| (9) Content | Including studies which explicitly address aspects of teacher leadership | Including studies, which explicitly address aspects of teacher leadership |
| (10) Number of reviewed articles | Total 150 articles | Total 41 articles |

It is here important to note that the teacher leadership research has largely emerged in the United States and other English-speaking Western countries (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Several authors suggested that there is not a great variety of empirical research conducted in Latin America (Bernal & Ibarrola, 2015; Parés, 2015). Despite this, in Mexico the concept of teacher leadership has been included in educational policies, such as the Mexican General Law of the System for Teachers Career (2019).

Investigating the relationship between teacher leadership and the improvement of instruction and student learning promises to fill an important gap in the literature (Harris, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) because can provide an illuminating and

better view of the scope of this phenomenon in the classroom. Likewise, a review of teacher leadership links to instruction and learning can be useful for promoting among teachers, school administrators, and policy-makers the actions that teacher leaders carry out in order to improve the quality of education and to promote the creation of a culture that aligns efforts and forms collaborative networks that develop teacher leadership (Kenjarski, 2015).

Based on this, the present systematic review aims to examine the link between teacher leadership, instructional practices, and student learning, in both English-speaking countries and Latin American studies, primarily in elementary education. The review was also conducted to provide the foundation for developing a research case study in elementary education in Mexico.

Method

This systematic review involves identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing the results of scholarly research (Bettany-Saltikov, 2012; Newman & Gough, 2020) of teacher leadership, primarily on elementary education in both English-speaking countries and Latin America. The review aim was to increase our knowledge of research conducted on the link between teacher leadership, instruction, and student learning. The scholarly journals included in this review were indexed in the databases of Scopus®, ERIC®, and Academic Search Complete®.

The process followed in the organization of the study is based on the protocol proposed by Newman and Gough (2020) that is oriented to systematic reviews in educational research. This process is represented in Fig. 4.1.

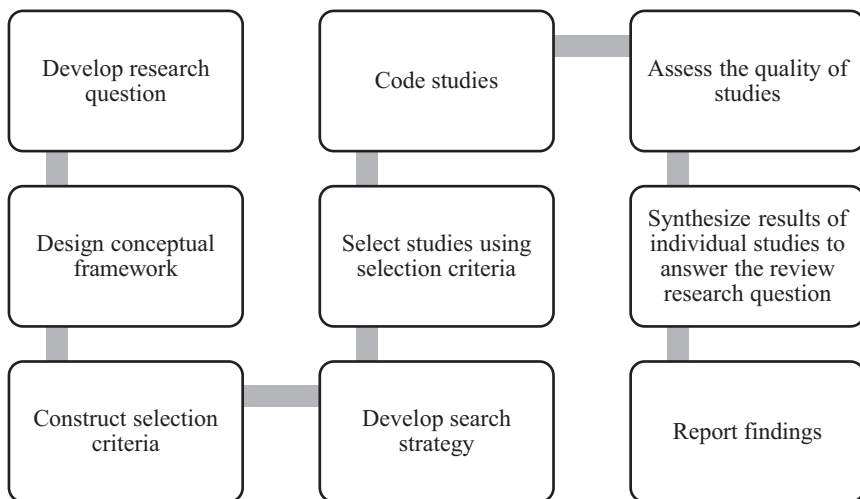


Fig. 4.1 Systematic review process. (Taken from: Newman & Gough, 2020, p. 6)

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion of research studies in this systematic review were the following (Table 4.2):

In defining the search terms, we established the topics of main interest, which were teacher leadership, teaching, and learning. Our search also included articles focused using the terms: << “teacher leadership” AND “elementary school” >> and its translation in Spanish << “liderazgo docente” AND “escuela primaria” >> .

Selection of Studies

We converted the articles from the databases into RIS format and they were transferred to Rayyan® to facilitate the reading of abstracts. The article selection process is presented in the following diagram (Fig. 4.2). In the first phase, we read the titles and eliminated the duplicates. In the second phase, we determined the relevance of the studies by reviewing the abstract, where we discarded articles that were not related to the topic and those that were not empirical articles. Finally, we

Table 4.2 Criteria of inclusion and exclusion

| | Inclusion criteria | Exclusion criteria |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Period | Research between January 2014 and April 2020 | |
| Language | Articles in English and Spanish | |
| Type of publication | Peer-reviewed academic papers | Studies without peer review |
| Type of article | Empirical research articles | Non-empirical articles (e.g., online presentations, center/organization reports, book chapters, books, literature reviews, systematic reviews, theoretical articles, methodological articles) |
| Paradigm | Qualitative and quantitative studies | |
| Area of subject | Education only | |
| Content | Studies that provide empirical evidence on the link between teacher leadership, instruction, and student learning Focused on teacher leadership Articles where teacher leadership was the research topic | Studies that do not contain empirical evidence of the relationship between teacher leadership and student learning Articles that are not focused on teacher leadership. Articles where teacher leadership is not explicitly the research focus |
| Research context | Studies carried out primarily at the elementary level including studies carried out in Latin America in any level | Studies that are not carried out in the context of elementary level (preschool, secondary, high school, university) |

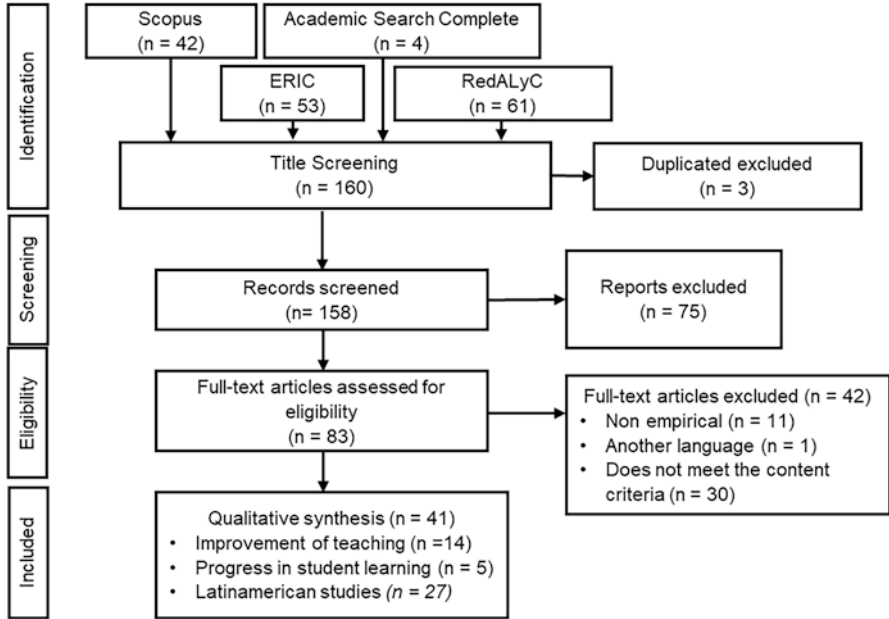


Fig. 4.2 Article selection process

downloaded the full articles for a thorough and in-depth reading through which we eliminated 42 more studies.

Coding of Studies

We codified studies in an Excel sheet, and designed a table to organize the information provided by the selected studies. There, we included data such as: year and place where the research was carried out, type of research, the purpose of the study, the techniques used, data analysis, design, sample, main results, and main topics. This coding allowed synthesizing the information to answer the question that guides the systematic review; it also facilitated the evaluation and quality of the studies (Newman & Gough, 2020). Figure 4.2 illustrates the process that we followed in the selection of the articles.

Synthesis of Results

The last step was to synthesize the information. We decided to carry out a configurative synthesis (Newman & Gough, 2020). This process included “reading, rereading, descriptive and analytical coding, theme development, constant comparison,

and iteration with theory” (Newman & Gough, 2020). In order to standardize this process and improve the validity of the results, we collected the data with a format from Bettany-Saltikov (2012), in which the information was synthesized based on the topics selected in the research question, that is, what is the link between teacher leadership, instruction, and the student learning. Then, we proceeded to categorize the subtopics that emerged, under a process called open coding.

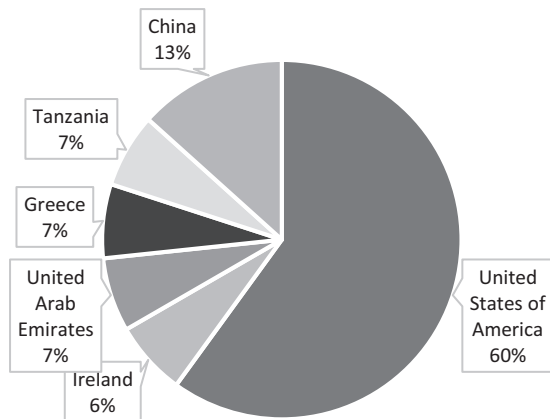
Findings

International Context

The following is a description of all the primary studies that were included in the systematic review. It is valuable for readers to remember that the selected period was from January 2014 to April 2020. Based on this, we found: one article from 2014, two from 2015, three from 2016, three from 2017, four from 2018, and two from 2019. We found no articles that shared the inclusion criteria in 2020. Of the fifteen articles in the review, the majority ($n = 9$; 60%) came from the United States of America, but six studies ($n = 6$; 40%) were conducted outside of this country as in China, Tanzania, Greece, the United Arab Emirates, and Ireland (Fig. 4.3). It is important to emphasize that we did not find any research in the Latin American context. Likewise, we need to point out that, when applying the search string in Spanish, the response in the three databases reported zero publications.

We also documented in this review other descriptive details about articles including research types and designs, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods. The type of study mostly used in the research was qualitative ($n = 10$; 67%) according to what was reported by the authors themselves; secondly, there were mixed methods studies ($n = 4$; 27%) and the least used was quantitative research

Fig. 4.3 Percentage of articles by country



($n = 1$; 6%), see Fig. 4.4. The most recurrent designs were case studies ($n = 8$) and surveys ($n = 4$) (for more details see Fig. 4.5).

To the researchers' credit, many used more than one data collection technique (see Fig. 4.6). Thus, the most frequent techniques of data collection were interviews ($n = 10$) and document reviews ($n = 7$). Data collected were analyzed, for the most part, through the qualitative approach, that is, through coding ($n = 11$), theme categorization ($n = 8$), and the cross-case method ($n = 2$).

There were differences in the samples selected in the different studies. Some of them included up to 937 primary school teachers (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017), while one study was based on the case of a single female teacher leader (Rust & Bergey, 2014). Likewise, the participants did not always define themselves as teacher leaders. In some studies, they were classroom teachers (without a formal teacher leader title) as well as those having a formal title of teacher leaders

Fig. 4.4 Percentage of articles by type of research

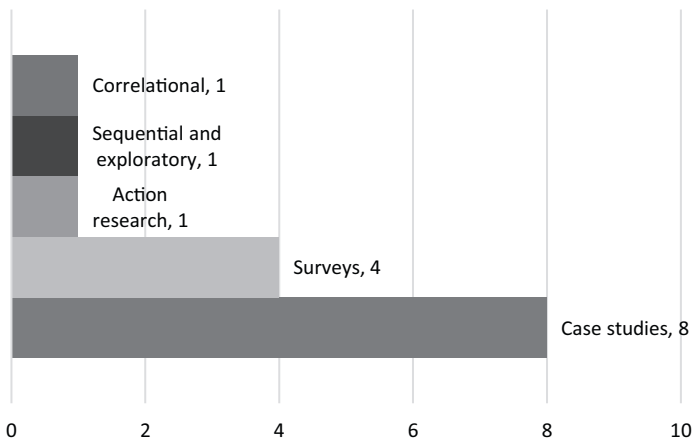
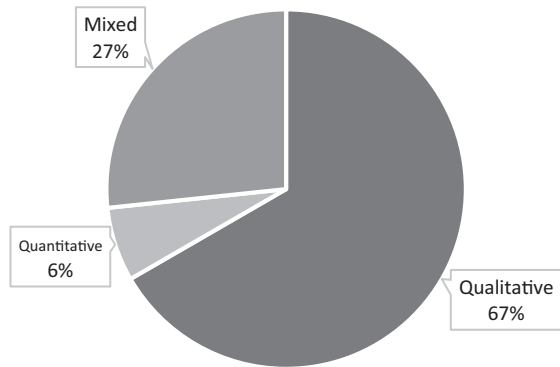


Fig. 4.5 Frequency of research designs included in the review

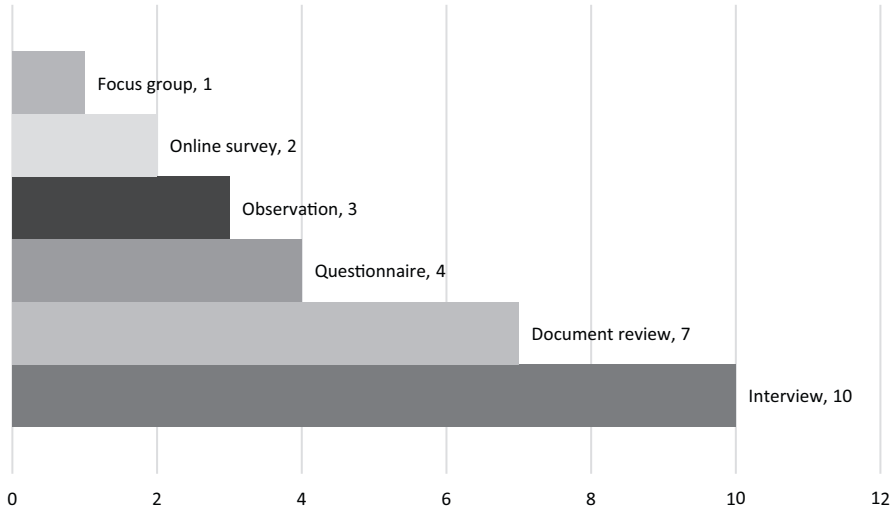


Fig. 4.6 Techniques used to collect the information

(Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017; Huang, 2016; Polly, 2017; Sabin, 2012; Wenner & Campbell, 2018; Yu, 2015).

After we analyzed the fifteen selected texts line by line, we found similarities in 14 of the 15 articles regarding the evidence that teacher leadership is related to improve teaching, so we proceeded to categorize the topics and thus group the authors who coincided (see Table 4.3). A relevant aspect that we found is that not only does the quality of teaching of the teacher leader improve but also that teacher leaders influence changes in their colleagues' instruction.

It was difficult to find support for the relationship between teacher leadership and student learning in elementary education. As seen in Table 4.3, only five articles found empirical evidence of this relationship in this educational level.

Of the five studies, four offered teacher testimonials on learning progress when there was some type of teacher leader intervention (see Table 4.4). A correlational study indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship of $r = 0.412$, which was significant at the 0.05 level, between teacher leadership and student performance (Sabin, 2012) (Table 4.5).

For practical purposes, we grouped the eleven categories presented in Table 4.2 (relationship of teacher leadership and teaching improvement) into three main themes: instruction to other teachers, curricular work, and student-centered teaching. In each of these three topics, we found evidence of the relationship with student learning.

Table 4.3 Relationship between teacher leadership and improvement of instruction

| Authors | Theme |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Donnelly et al. (2019), Gordon and Solis (2018), McBrayer et al. (2018), Swai and Glanfield (2018), Von-Esch (2018), Wenner (2017), Wenner and Campbell (2018) | Instruction to other teachers through some program or professional learning community |
| Gordon and Solis (2018), Green and Kent (2016), McBrayer et al. (2018), Von-Esch (2018) | Employing teaching strategies learned from teacher leaders as a result of their instruction |
| Hovardas (2016), Rust and Bergey (2014), Wenner (2017), Wenner and Campbell (2018) | Flexible teaching planning |
| Huang (2016), Rust and Bergey (2014), Wenner (2017), Wenner and Campbell (2018) | Ability to enact a specific curriculum for their students |
| Donnelly et al. (2019), Gordon and Solis (2018), Hovardas (2016), Rust and Bergey (2014), Yu (2015) | Attention to their students' needs through differentiated instruction |
| Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017), Donnelly et al. (2019), Gordon and Solis (2018), Rust and Bergey (2014), Yu (2015) | Formative assessment |
| Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017), Donnelly et al. (2019), Gordon and Solis (2018), Rust and Bergey (2014), Von-Esch (2018), Wenner (2017), Wenner and Campbell (2018) | Knowledge and understanding of students for effective teaching and attending their needs |
| Gordon and Solis (2018), Green and Kent (2016), Wenner (2017), Wenner and Campbell (2018) | Training other teachers through observation |
| Huang (2016), Polly (2017), Wenner (2017), Wenner and Campbell (2018) | Production of supplementary resources for effective teaching |
| Donnelly et al. (2019), Hovardas (2016), Huang (2016), Wenner (2017), Yu (2015) | Student-centered teaching |
| Al-Taneiji and Ibrahim (2017), Hovardas (2016), Huang (2016), Wenner (2017), Yu (2015) | Use of attractive and innovative teaching methodologies and strategies |

Table 4.4 Evidence of student learning provided by author

| Autor | Evidence |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Green and Kent (2016) | Academic growth of students in mathematics |
| Gordon and Solis (2018) | Improving student achievement on standardized assessments Improvement of internal school evaluation scores Impact on student performance and reflection |
| Donnelly et al. (2019) | Learning about individual differences Results in self-confidence and student participation |
| Huang (2016) | Interest in learning about the environment |
| Sabin (2012) | Statistically significant relationship between teacher leadership and academic performance |

Table 4.5 Evidence of student learning as a result of some teacher leadership intervention

| Teacher leadership intervention | Learning outcome |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Use of teaching strategies learned from teacher leaders as a result of their instruction | Academic growth of students in mathematics Improving student achievement on standardized assessments Improvement of internal school evaluation scores |
| Attending to their students' needs through differentiated instruction | Learning about individual differences Improving performance in their classes |
| Formative assessment | Impact on student performance and reflection. |
| Knowledge and understanding of students for effective teaching and attending to their needs | Improved self-confidence and student participation in activities |
| Use of attractive and innovative teaching methodologies and strategies | Interest in learning about the environment |

Instruction to Other Teachers

The leadership of one teacher impacts the learning of students in his or her classroom and the learning of other teachers who are under their tutelage (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2011; Kenjarski, 2015; Lumpkin et al., 2014); In other words, the teacher leader also fulfills a tutoring role by providing training and coaching to other teachers; sometimes formally and sometimes informally. According to a study of the reviewed authors, 90% of teachers who participated in Professional Learning Communities led by teacher leaders learned and applied strategies that promoted student-centered teaching from this intervention (McBrayer et al., 2018). Another study reported that these spaces for interaction between teachers and teacher leaders allowed those in front of the group to share successful instructional practices, learn from others, and improve their intervention (Donnelly et al., 2019). Studies also showed evidence that teacher leaders helped other teachers implement instructional strategies, offered support when questions arise, modeled classes, and monitored practices through observation and feedback (Donnelly et al., 2019; Gordon & Solis, 2018; Swai & Glanfield, 2018; Von-Esch, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2018). In the words of a teacher who benefited from the follow-up of a teacher leader: “Having a teacher leading the learning of other teachers makes a big difference [...] the focus is what we do in classes, which is all about teaching and facilitating student learning [...] and how we can improve that” (Swai & Glanfield, 2018, p. 187).

Mentoring others is important because teachers learn to think about what they can change in their instruction for the benefit of their students. In the following excerpt a teacher leader highlighted how his presence at a school was a benefit for teachers:

Since the day teachers in our schools became aware that I'm also facilitating the learning of math teachers in the district, they have been in demand of me for their help. They have been calling me to go to their classes to help them with teaching, and others call me at our staff

room to discuss some issues related to mathematics teaching. (Swai & Glanfield, 2018, p. 191)

Another study reported that the movement toward an improvement in instruction for students depended, in part, on the work of the teacher leaders because, according to testimonies, they were an influence for other teachers to change their approach from traditional teaching to a more constructivist one (Von-Esch, 2018).

This systematic review affirmed that teachers learn and implement innovative instruction strategies, such as research, thanks to a teacher leader (Green & Kent, 2016), which in turn, leads to improving students' academic performance:

[...] teachers utilized more hands-on approaches, and student achievement improved [...] At the end of the implementation year [of the program], fifth graders' STAAR scores improved significantly, and third and fourth graders' campus and district assessment scores also improved. The tutoring program was successful in many ways. (Gordon & Solis, 2018, p. 17)

Curriculum Work

In the previous section, we described how teacher leadership is related to teacher's instruction. In this section, we examine how teacher leaders carry out curricular work with the intention of improving their own teaching. This curriculum work included: the production of supplementary resources for effective teaching (Huang, 2016; Polly, 2017; Wenner, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2018), developing flexible teaching planning (Hovardas, 2016; Rust & Bergey, 2014; Wenner, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2018), enacting a specific curriculum for their students (Huang, 2016; Rust & Bergey, 2014; Wenner, 2017; Wenner & Campbell, 2018), and using and instructing for formative evaluation (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017; Donnelly et al., 2019; Gordon & Solis, 2018; Rust & Bergey, 2014; Yu, 2015).

When we analyzed the articles, we found that there are three main ways in which teacher leaders improve their teaching processes and help other teachers to improve their practice. First, teacher leaders can plan and develop a curriculum carefully and adequately directed to attend to the needs of their students (Rust & Bergey, 2014). They pointed to an example of a teacher who developed an accessible curriculum for the entire student population, especially for those students who do not have English as their first language, to fully integrate them into learning experiences. As the teacher leader in Rust & Bergey (2014, p. 76) study stated:

The time spent in the planning stages before a lesson is implemented is so vital for determining what we as teachers want each individual student gain from a lesson. Then, we can design assessments or modify our direct instruction in such a way as to provide the necessary skills and tools for the lesson's goals.

Second, teacher leaders show an intention to be flexible in planning, when some situation interfered with their lesson plans, they decided to make adaptations, trying to convert the barriers into opportunities:

I remember an instance in the past when the interpreter did not show up for the scheduled appointment...I had to start from scratch and reconsider the whole thing.... And then I felt as if I did not need any interpreter again. (Hovardas, 2016, p. 246)

Third, teacher leaders rely on good resources. Polly (2017) states that effective instruction only occurs when teachers have access to a comprehensive set of high-quality curriculum resources. Likewise, in the review, we found that teacher leaders indicated that in order to achieve significant learning, they had to design their own curriculum materials or help to obtain them (Huang, 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2018). An interesting aspect on this point is that they not only provided or designed resources for themselves or other teachers. For example, Gordon & Solis (2018) reported the case of a teacher leader, who after identifying that the lack of school supplies as one of the obstacles for their students to achieve better results, did not hesitate to provide them with folders, writing materials, dividers, scheduled homework, etc.

A consistent theme in the reviewed articles is how teacher leaders conducted their evaluations. Teacher leaders promoted formative assessment to redirect and make decisions about teaching. They assured that it is vitally important to have multiple ways of evaluating and suggesting observation, notes, and class records as reliable sources to follow up on students (Donnelly et al., 2019; Gordon & Solis, 2018; Rust & Bergey, 2014). In the text by Donnelly et al. (2019, p. 42) a research participant stated that: "...to keep a record of your observational assessments... [It is] especially important... so you can...figure out what was the trigger and then you can use that [evidence]...to scaffold learning and improve teaching". This teacher, at the beginning of the cycle, detected five students who had language problems and during the first weeks she dedicated herself to recording everything she observed regarding their actions and expressions. When she noticed that she already had enough information, she began to set objectives, learning strategies, and teaching strategies for support plans that she developed for those students.

Formative assessment can be simple (as a checklist) or more elaborate. It all depends on the availability of time and resources of the teachers. What is important is that formative assessment is constant and it is integrated into the teaching-learning process (Gordon & Solis, 2018; Yu, 2015). Yu (2015, p. 181) reported:

I assess not only a students' academic performance. As a classroom teacher, I also take into consideration their family background and other things. I remember once in my own records, I put something totally descriptive with no number quantifiers in a student's record.

Formative evaluation also includes feedback. This part of the process is essential, since students also learn from it. It allows students to understand what level they have reached in a certain area. Gordon and Solis (2018) described how teachers included positive comments regarding the effectiveness of formative assessment strategies and the impact that these strategies had on student performance and reflection.

Student-Centered Teaching

A common factor identified in the studies is that teacher leaders promote and practice a teaching approach centered on the students' interests and needs. Teacher leaders attach importance to attending to student needs, through the use of attractive and innovative teaching methodologies and strategies, rather than to the coverage of textbooks (Donnelly et al., 2019; Hovardas, 2016; Wenner, 2017). Authors such as Huang (2016) refer to concern for the well-being and learning of students that is at the center of the reflexivity of the leaders in all the schools in their study. Teacher leaders were motivated to enrich their professional knowledge. That is, their interest grew in responding to what students require to learn.

In order to attend to students' needs, teacher leaders can carry out different actions; one frequently mentioned in the reviewed articles was differentiated instruction. As teacher leaders, they shared a sense of responsibility to produce meaningful learning experiences for their students to succeed and meet planned goals so they used differentiation of work so that each child achieves valuable results (Donnelly et al., 2019). An example is the case of a teacher leader who, having in his classroom a student with literacy problems, created visual cards for the child to learn some of the words that the rest were already learning. As a result, the student began to feel included and eager to learn more words, all thanks to the learning opportunities that the teacher provided through differentiated teaching.

Another recurring strategy found in the studies was after-school tutoring for students who needed to improve their grades. Gordon & Solis (2018) reported how teacher leaders, together with other class teachers, created an intervention program to serve students who needed help with a subject. For several weeks, teacher leaders offered direct after-school assistance. The study confirmed that there was progress in the achievement of the students who attended the program:

Galena came in for support this week... I asked her about her last science test. She almost earned an "A", she obtained a score of 88. I asked her if she was happy with the results. She smiled and nodded. I told her I was proud of her and we moved on to the next science unit. (Gordon & Solis, 2018, p. 7)

Other teachers chose to provide personalized assistance during class time, looking for the appropriate spaces and moments, since they pointed out that in the classroom it is not possible to meet all the individual needs of the students and therefore they resort to teaching one by one and adapting some activities for students who require it (Yu, 2015).

Another relevant aspect for successful teaching is the knowledge and understanding of students (Rust & Bergey, 2014; Von-Esch, 2018). As expressed by a teacher leader: "You need to have a strong foundation [of students' knowledge]. Otherwise . . . if you don't understand how kids learn the language, even the best teaching strategies aren't going to be all that effective" (Von-Esch, 2018, p. 160). Another teacher pointed out that it is important to know the students in order to understand them and help them solve behavioral and learning problems that

teachers have detected with the support of the student's parents (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017).

To achieve this, the teacher leaders used different techniques such as an interview with parents (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017; Donnelly et al., 2019; Yu, 2015), asking open questions to students (Donnelly et al., 2019), listening deeply to students in informal conversations (Al-Taneiji & Ibrahim, 2017; Donnelly et al., 2019), and keeping anecdotal records (Rust & Bergey, 2014; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Yu, 2015). Donnelly et al. (2019) affirmed that these actions create a learning environment where students feel free to participate and express themselves.

Once teacher leaders gain knowledge of their students, they make more informed decisions about which teaching strategies and methodologies to apply to achieve success. In the systematic review, we identified eight strategies that teacher leaders applied in their workplaces, namely: school fairs (Wenner, 2017), outdoor education (Hovardas, 2016), *The Five E Instructional Model* (Green & Kent, 2016), experiential lessons (Huang, 2016), science contests (Huang, 2016), research-based projects (Huang, 2016; Rust & Bergey, 2014; Yu, 2015), transdisciplinary projects (Huang, 2016), and curricular adaptations (Von-Esch, 2018; Wenner, 2017).

A teacher leader recognized the risk of traditional instruction and observed a shift in student interest in environmental education when she added experiential lessons as a teaching strategy:

Most environmental education focuses on knowledge transmission rather than on personal experiences of Nature. Students might know many names of animals and plants and get high scores in school tests, but they have no feeling for Nature and might pick flowers and kill insects. But when they have real experiences with Nature, they become curious about what happens in Nature recently, for example, a student came to me and asked me many questions about a native plant after my experiential lesson. This never happened before when I taught traditionally. (Huang, 2016, p. 228)

Studies of Leadership in Latin America

In Latin America, the study of educational leadership is very heterogeneous and usually focuses on the role of the principal rather than teachers as leaders (Aravena et al., 2020; Slater et al., 2018; Torres-Arcadia et al., 2016). Although a major contribution to the study of leadership in Latin America has been made by the international principal preparation project (Torres-Arcadia et al., 2016; Webber, 2008), the study of teacher leaders without management responsibilities has been relatively recent in the region. In general, it has been found that leadership tends to have diverse meanings for different educational actors (Maureira Cabrera et al., 2019). This is also reflected in the instruments used for studying school leadership (Fromm et al., 2017; López Alfaro & Gallegos Araya, 2015). Other findings indicate that principals and teachers may have different perceptions on how principals lead the school, especially in aspects related to enhancing school climate and promoting incentives (Sepúlveda & Molina, 2019).

Traditional Leadership

Studies on leadership in Latin America tend to focus on actors who have a formal institutional leadership role, as in the case of principals (Elizondo-García et al., 2019; Estrada Loya & Villarreal Ballesteros, 2019; Galdames & Gonzalez, 2016; Hoffmann et al., 2017; Kri et al., 2021; Torres-Arcadia et al., 2016; Vargas-Jiménez, 2017). It has even been documented that official initiatives promote a traditional school leadership for the principal as the single person who manages the whole school (Pineda-Baéz, 2021; Santizo Rodall & Ortega Salazar, 2018). According to Margan & Pascual (2018), studies focused on principals stress that the decisions for improving achievement are based more on state-mandated goals rather than teachers' practices or recommendations.

However, there are studies that have focused on the leadership of teachers who do not have official authority figures (Caján, 2017; Vargas Londoño et al., 2020). For example, it has been found that when students perceive that the teacher has expertise in the content knowledge, they have greater authority. However, no relationship was found between the perceived authority of teachers and the academic achievement of students (Díaz Sacco, 2016).

In Mexico and other Latin American countries, teachers can access managerial positions without the need for a training process, so sometimes they may face challenges for which they are not prepared (Cisneros-Cohernour, 2021, 2022; Loya & Ballesteros, 2019). It has been found that age, professional development, and opportunities to exercise leadership are essential elements for teachers to decide to assume a managerial position (Elizondo-García et al., 2019; Galdames & Gonzalez, 2016; Volante et al., 2020).

Emergence of Other Forms of Leadership

Currently, there are strategies that seek to systematically train teachers for future leadership positions in different areas, such as instructional leadership. The training is carried out through diverse means of simulation (Leiva et al., 2016; Müller et al., 2014). For example, leadership preparation programs in Chile have increased the curriculum content related to instructional aspects of leadership prioritizing student learning, tools for school improvement, and teacher development (Muñoz et al., 2019).

Other studies have found that teachers may also have a transformational leadership orientation that was positively associated with innovation (Leal-Soto et al., 2016; Meza-Mejía & Flores-Alanís, 2014; Miranda et al., 2016; Torcatt González, 2020). In addition, other studies mentioned that a series of variables such as working conditions, teacher motivation, and teaching skills may play an equally relevant role as the leadership exercised by the principal (Montecinos et al., 2020; Romero & Krichesky, 2018; Villagra et al., 2018). Therefore, the pedagogical leadership of

the teacher may be an important type of leadership to be studied (Villagra et al., 2018).

Leadership, Quality, and Learning

Finally, it has been identified that a participatory democratic leadership can help to improve the quality of the school (Hoffmann et al., 2017; Maureira Cabrera et al., 2019; Vargas-Jiménez, 2017). Studies at the elementary level have found a relationship between distributed leadership and mathematics learning in elementary students (López & Gallegos, 2017). In particular, participation in decision-making processes and cooperation of leadership teams were significantly associated with student learning (Torcatt González, 2020). However, models that require sharing leadership and decision-making in educational settings are little practiced in reality (Botello et al., 2016; Castro Castro et al., 2019).

It is possible that the types of participative leadership oriented to sharing of activities are so well regarded because they encourage listening to diverse voices and peer-to-peer learning (López Alfaro & Gallegos Araya, 2015; Montecinos et al., 2020). Other types of leadership such as the emerging “interactive leadership” (as a type of instructional leadership) where the principal constantly interacts with diverse members of the school have had good results in improving school climate which offers an indirect effect in improving teaching (Romero & Krichesky, 2018). However, distributed leadership still has nuances of traditional leadership and there is a lower frequency of strategic orientations that seek a long-term vision of school development (Maureira Cabrera et al., 2019).

Teacher Leadership Studies in Latin America

As stated before there is practically no research on teacher leadership in Mexico and other Latin American countries. An exception is the research of Pineda-Báez (2021), conducted as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. Pineda (2021) analyzed policy documents in Colombia related to teacher recruitment, selection, and evaluation to examine the meaning of teacher leadership in these policies. She also found that the prevailing meaning of leadership was related to hierarchical positions of leadership.

Discussion and Conclusions

At the outset of the study, we highlighted the similarities and differences observed in the body of literature reviewed for this work with those of the review by Nguyen et al. (2020). Our study focused on examining the link among teacher leadership, instruction, and learning, with an emphasis on studies conducted in elementary schools in English-speaking countries because it was the basis for conducting further research on teacher leadership in elementary education in México. This decision could be a limitation, since it did not include studies in other levels of education conducted in English-speaking countries. Our work also included a review of studies in Latin America on teacher leadership, although we found the research is almost inexistent on this topic.

During our review, we found that the type of research on teacher leadership continues to be, for the most part, qualitative case studies. However, we reflected on the fact that even though researchers declare that their studies are qualitative does not necessarily mean that they are conducting their studies from the naturalistic paradigm that emphasizes a deep understanding of the complexities of the context and the issues related to teacher leadership (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Martínez Miguélez, 2004; Patton, 2015).

Our results were consistent with the work of Wenner and Campbell (2017), since we observed that interviews were the main strategy for obtaining information. Unlike former reviews, there was an increase in the percentage of studies carried out outside the United States on teacher leadership, since in this study the sample from other countries was 40% compared to the 24% reported by Wenner & Campbell (2017). By including studies conducted in Latin America, our work expands the understanding of teacher leadership to other countries.

A consistent aspect with previous systematic reviews (Harris, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) is that we did not find empirical research articles conducted in Spanish-speaking countries on teacher leadership. One of the reasons that could explain these findings is that educational leadership in Spanish-speaking countries generally equates leadership with the work of the principals or school directors (Arzola Franco et al., 2016; Cisneros-Cohernour, 2021, 2022; Flores Lagos et al., 2017), because they see principals as responsible for tasks as planning, sustaining, coordinating, and managing the school (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2017). For example, a study carried out in primary schools in three towns of Mexico found that teachers still perceive leadership as a hierarchical function assigned to the principal; the idea of distributed leadership still causes conflict for this group of teachers because they accept their subordinate status (Arzola Franco et al., 2016). Consequently, we encourage the scientific community in this region to inquire about this phenomenon because, as is demonstrated in the findings of the studies analyzed on this review, teacher leadership can have positive effects on the quality of teaching and learning.

Further reviews could also focus on the meaning of teacher leadership in Latin America and other Spanish-speaking countries. We also suggest that future research

not only examine studies focused on the concept of teacher leadership, but also delve into teachers' own understandings of their roles and expressions of leadership.

The actions of teacher leaders that we report in this study are consistent with the characteristics and statements found in the literature about their role. Some researchers claim that teacher leaders maintain positive relationships, influence other colleagues, and work collaboratively (González Fernández et al., 2019; González et al., 2013; Kenjarski, 2015; Lumpkin et al., 2014). These characteristics are reflected in the fragments of interviews and examples of the analyzed cases, such as in the article by Gordon and Solis (2018) where teacher leaders carried out a direct assistance intervention project for students who needed support with some classes. This project demanded teacher leaders train other teachers (with and without formal leadership qualifications) in order to participate in the project, to relate effectively, and to work as a team. The effectiveness of these actions is corroborated by the outstanding results they obtained.

We also confirmed that teachers with a leadership position are change agents (González Fernández et al., 2019; Kenjarski, 2015) regarding the instruction of their colleagues and work in favor for improving the results at their schools (Cano Flores et al., 2013; González Fernández et al., 2019; Louis et al., 2010; Sun & Leithwood, 2012). As explained by the case of Green & Kent (2016), teacher leaders helped other teachers change their traditional teaching methods by using a methodology called *Five E*, thanks to which students were able to develop critical thinking, and reflection in mathematics. Therefore, we found that teacher leaders can be a key factor in the changes and improvements that impact their schools.

In the literature reviews by Harris (2017), Nguyen et al. (2020), and Wenner & Campbell (2017), factors that affect teacher leadership were also discussed. Therefore, it is deduced that this aspect has been repeatedly investigated and documented. However, there has rarely been enough emphasis on the capacity and ability of teacher leaders to address barriers. In this review, we found that teacher leaders see barriers as opportunities. They adapt their planning and teaching, which allows them to succeed (Hovardas, 2016; Von-Esch, 2018). An interesting line for future research is to inquire how teacher leaders solve specific problems they face on their work, not only in their teaching, but understanding how they can serve as an example for other teachers.

This article is valuable because we were able to obtain evidence from prior studies in English-speaking countries, that teacher leadership helps to improve instruction and student learning (Harris, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Thanks to a deep and conscious analysis of the corpus, we were able to obtain data that confirm the relationships among teacher leadership, instruction, and student learning. However, more research is needed in Spanish-speaking countries.

In addition, it is important to discuss the connections between teacher leadership and student learning. There were a small number of studies that provided evidence on this relationship. This is consistent with the findings of Harris (2017), Nguyen et al. (2020), and Wenner & Campbell (2017). In our systematic review, we found such a relationship. In other words, there was an improvement in student learning when there was some type of teacher leader intervention involved, for example,

when personalized counseling was offered or when there was a change on teacher instruction. However, there are few empirical studies to validate the indirect relationship between these variables (Sun & Leithwood, 2012).

We conclude that during the last thirty years, teacher leadership continues to be studied through the same type of research and techniques, so there is a need for more studies using multiple methodologies, with a deep understanding of context and situationality. It is also important that Spanish-speaking countries begin to identify teacher leadership as a possible avenue for study and innovation. The synthesized review demonstrated that the role of a teacher leader in schools is essential to renew the instruction of other teachers and thus improve their teaching. Teacher leaders also provide material resources that improve the quality of teaching, make plans and study plans tailored and contextualized to student needs, use formative assessment, as well as enact a student-centered teaching style. Together, these actions provide benefits for student learning. Studies on the relationship between student learning and teacher leadership continue to be insufficient, so it is important to conduct future studies, particularly in Latin America and other Spanish-speaking countries.

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Chapter 5

The Role of Teamwork in the Development of Teacher Leadership: A Cross-Cultural Analysis from Colombia, Mexico, and Spain



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Abstract The dearth of studies about teacher leadership in Spanish-speaking contexts is noticeable. This research, which is part of the International Study of Teacher Leadership (ISTL), sought to fill this gap and focused specifically on conceptualizations of *teamwork*, an essential feature of teacher leadership. Document analysis was conducted using key policy documents from Colombia, Mexico, and Spain to determine convergences and divergences between the conceptualizations, and to establish their connections with teacher leadership as theorized in distributed leadership. The findings stress the need to promote the recognition of teachers' intellectual capital and their role in the generation of initiatives and innovations in the three contexts examined. They also stress that teamwork requires attending to organizational aspects to guarantee quality time and adequate spaces to foster team dialogue. In addition, both teachers and principals need preparation for teamwork and collaboration, particularly in connection to refining their socioemotional and communicative skills so that meaningful dialogical exchanges can be enhanced. Finally,

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the study suggests that there is a need to analyze the contents of new proposals for legislation to determine changing perspectives of teacher leadership as a response to the complex social problems faced in the three countries.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Cross-cultural studies · Teamwork · Collaboration

Introduction

Teachers are key actors in responses to shifts in education worldwide (Poekert et al., 2016). This is important for countries that face permanent social crises which themselves create particular conditions that teachers must confront. Such is the case of Mexico, Colombia, and Spain: three countries that have recently dealt with a substantial wave of immigration resulting from internal and external political and social turmoil. Moreover, Mexico and Colombia share additional conditions of inequity, social exclusion, and violence. These factors strongly permeate the life of school communities in these countries and negatively affect not only educational outcomes in them but also their development of social, economic, and human capital (Ospina & Giménez, 2009). Absenteeism, students' low perceptions of the value of education, and interruptions in students' trajectories are some of the endemic challenges for teachers in these regions. Teamwork plays a key role in helping teachers confront these challenges in joint efforts to improve the quality of students' educational experiences. Indeed, at perhaps no other time in history has teamwork been so central to schools' initiatives in facing both local and global challenges. The disruptions produced by the current COVID-19 virus have foregrounded the importance of teacher cooperation and, in this context, development through both formal and informal collaborative learning has become a crucial part of teachers' efforts to sustain their students' learning processes (Alexandrou, 2020; Hortigüela-Alcalá et al., 2020; López, 2020).

Teamwork in educational environments has been widely recognized as a vital factor in student achievement, in the production of new knowledge about curriculum and teaching, in influencing students' lives, and in generating innovations for different contexts (Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018; Pineda-Báez et al., 2020; Schonoor & Davern, 2005; Voogt et al., 2016). Teamwork is the foundation for teachers' collaborative work and plays an important role in their ongoing professional development (Bernal & Ibarrola, 2015; Bolívar, 2015; Mullen & Browne-Ferrigno, 2018). When teachers collaborate through teamwork, they strengthen bonds and forge a sense of community, thereby reinforcing their commitment to student achievement and building school capacity (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Teamwork is an essential feature of teacher leadership as teacher leaders mobilize their colleagues, encouraging them to build on their intellectual capital and experiences in seeking collective solutions to improve student learning and school conditions (Cosenza, 2015; Danielson, 2006; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). In this study, teacher leadership is understood as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively,

influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, pp. 287–288). This definition allows three performance levels: individual, collective or collaborative, and organizational.

Teamwork and collaboration are both key aspects of teacher leadership (Webber, 2018), which is essential for building school capacity and strengthening communities of learning that promote reflective thinking and the professional sharing of pedagogical ideas (Conway, 2015; Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teamwork, which requires participant interdependency and a strong sense of purpose (Gates & Robinson, 2009), promotes collaboration and translates into informed decision-making processes (Cosenza, 2015). Teacher leaders take different routes in promoting teamwork and professional learning but generally embrace the sharing and modeling of good practices and offers of support to colleagues (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Even though recent research has highlighted the role played by teacher leadership in the movement toward more distributed forms of leadership and collective school capacity (Bernal & Ibarrola, 2015; Liu, 2021), there remains uncertainty as to what teacher leadership is and embraces (Liu, 2021; Schott et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Weinstein & Muñoz, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This is particularly true for teamwork, the quintessential essence of teacher collaboration. Some studies (Landa & Donaldson, 2020; Schott et al., 2020; Szczesiul & HuiZenga, 2015; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) have noted the scarcity of information about the influence of teacher leadership on the very nature of collaboration and on the effect of the distinct roles played by teachers. They pinpoint the lack of clarity regarding the influence of the characteristics of schools’ contexts on the nature of such collaboration. Additionally, there is a notable absence of information about perspectives on teacher leadership from contexts outside the Anglo-American sphere. Although a recent systematic review of the literature (Schott et al., 2020) noted a slight recent increase in the study of Asian contexts, there was no mention of the Latin American or Spanish milieus.

It is worth pointing out that, although research on school leadership in Latin America and Spain has advanced, it has focused mainly on leadership by principals or headmasters (Aravena & Hallinger, 2017; Weinstein et al., 2016), and teacher leadership remains largely unexplored (Fierro-Evans & Fortoul-Ollivier, 2021; Gratacós et al., 2021; Pineda-Báez, 2021; Pineda-Báez et al., 2019). Accordingly, the present study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of situations in Colombia, Mexico, and Spain, which are three different contexts united by a historical background, commonalities in their current social and political circumstances, and language. The study centered on *teamwork* as a central theme in teacher leadership and is grounded in the need to respond to current challenges that teachers face in the three contexts. The research delved into the meanings attributed to *teamwork* in policy documents concerning teachers in all three countries and discusses the implications of those meanings with respect to contextual factors. This study allows

understanding the role of teamwork in the development of teacher leadership in the three contexts. The guiding questions were:

- What are the meanings attributed to *teamwork*, as a key feature of teacher leadership, in policy documents concerning teachers in Colombia, Mexico, and Spain?
- What are the differences between how *teamwork* is conceptualized in these three contexts?

Significance of the Study

The present research addresses the need for more comparative studies (Schott et al., 2020) and a better understanding of the role of teamwork in the development of teacher leadership. It examines policies in three different contexts and addressed gaps in information about distributed forms of leadership in Latin America and Spain, where leadership is circumscribed to the roles performed by principals and school administrators, leaving aside collective forms of leadership that support school capacity (Pineda-Báez et al., 2019). Moreover, as previous studies have suggested (Coronel Llamas, 2005), the present study also hypothesizes that there are prevailing teacher beliefs that the classroom is a private space, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, as well as a poor culture of classroom observation in these contexts (OECD, 2018). These situations, in turn, hinder the dissemination of knowledge among peers and teachers' abilities to act jointly to improve school conditions. Additionally, the present study provides points of reflection on educational policies and contributes to the International Study of Teacher Leadership (www.mru.ca/istl) (ISTL), which seeks better understandings about this topic that can inform teacher professional development programs.

Theoretical Framework

Teacher leadership is associated with distributed leadership. The following section discusses the foundations of distributed leadership and the concept of teamwork in the academic milieu.

Distributed Leadership

The model of *distributed leadership* has highlighted the importance of collective learning and the expansion of roles and practices that transcend formally designated posts (Bolden, 2011; Goksoy, 2016; Harris, 2014). For schools, distributed leadership has implied moving beyond the notion of the principal or headmaster as the

sole leader and focusing on how to build capacity based on group activity (Leithwood et al., 2009). Distribution of leadership does not mean grouping individual actions to reach a common goal; rather, it involves a combination of collective efforts, permanent interaction, and influence without disregard for personal objectives and agendas (Harris, 2014; Paredes et al., 2007). More than the sum of individual contributions, distributed leadership focuses on concerted actions and conjoined agency—or the ways that “agents synchronize their actions by having regard to their own plans, those of their peers, and their sense of unit membership” (Gronn, 2002, p. 431). It centers on the flow of influence from practices resulting from networks of relationships and interactions among school staff (Gronn, 2002; Paredes et al., 2007). Although participatory collective sense-making, responsibility, and actions performed by people are at the core of distributed leadership (Brown et al., 2020; Leithwood et al., 2009), its essence lies in interactions that take place through interdependent collaborative work (Harris & Jones, 2012; Spillane, 2006). This implies that teachers work together, accommodating each other’s plans and ideas according to the particularities and needs of their situations and contexts.

Distributed leadership is linked to activity theory and distributed cognition (Bolden, 2011; López, 2013; Spillane et al., 2004). These theories comprehend human behavior, knowledge, and activities as complex and permanently changing systems determined by individuals’ interactions within their environments. Hence, human activity is social, and knowledge is an intersubjective product (López, 2013) that resides “in people, practices, objects and structures that compromise our environment, and is mediated through interactions between these” (Brown et al., 2020, p. 3). Paredes et al. (2007) explained that leadership practice in this framework is a “networked web of individuals, artifacts, and situations” (p. 70). Distributed leadership is therefore a situated practice (Spillane, 2006) dependent upon the nature of individuals’ interactions in their cultural, social, and historical contexts (Hallinger, 2018).

Distributed leadership challenges school leadership models focused on individual figures and static processes and promotes democracy and the participation of school members, particularly teachers, thereby leading to better results for the school community (Bernal & Ibarrola, 2015; Harris, 2014; Riveros-Barrera, 2012). Distributed leadership is not restricted to decentralizing roles or functions but rather embraces the notion of the school as a professional community of learners (Bolívar, 2010). Consequently, distributed leadership favors the production of knowledge when teachers share their practices, which in turn improves collaborative work and the development of expertise and innovation (Brown et al., 2020; Harris, 2003). Distributed leadership not only promotes teachers’ sense of agency (Polatcan, 2021) but influences capacity building and organizational change (Harris, 2008). When teachers work collegially in decision-making processes, opportunities for school improvement increase (Conway & Andrews, 2015; Harris, 2014).

However, schools’ internal and external conditions must be examined to eliminate barriers, such as bureaucracy, that hinder distributed leadership so that proper conditions for collective work can be implemented (Bolívar, 2010). Harris (2014) argued that this requires those in formal roles to relinquish some power though it

does not imply disregard for vertical hierarchies. In her view, this type of leadership involves both vertical and lateral distributions as well as formal and informal roles. She proposed that talent should be discovered and fostered, as well as the creation of “cultural conditions and structural opportunities where distributed leadership can operate and can flourish” (Harris, 2008, p. 184). A synthesis of research on distributed leadership by Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) demonstrated its effects on various dimensions, including team functioning, trust among teachers, and job satisfaction. They argued that misconceptions about distributed leadership emerge when schools conceive of it as a blueprint or when those in power use it as a means to insert standardized practices or increase teacher workloads.

Teamwork

At the core of distributed leadership is teamwork. Teams are groups of interdependent individuals who, through functional interactions, improve their capacities to respond to complex scenarios (Chapman et al., 2020). Teamwork, therefore, consists of “the collective behaviors that enhance the effective functioning of a team” (Main, 2010, p. 78). It requires that members use reciprocal interdependence, or a high level of interaction and input, to influence each other’s work (Thompson, 2004). For teachers, this means not merely sharing common planning schedules but understanding and sharing a vision, beliefs, and effective practices (Schnorr & Davern, 2005). Teamwork in schools varies. For example, a review of literature by Vangrieken et al. (2015) showed that collaboration, an essential feature of teamwork, takes shape in a continuum depending upon the degree of a group’s entitativity, or its perception as a cohesive entity. This continuum ranges from “mere aggregates of individuals to strong team collaboration” (p. 17). In a similar vein, Svanbjörnsdóttir et al. (2016) argued that those variations range from compliant teams, or groups of teachers that complete projects without strengthening relationships between each other, to learning teams of professional collaboration. These latter revolve around goal orientation and the tripartite connection between teachers, students, and the team itself, referring to “constant and committed cooperation, with efforts to strengthen all partners through constructive reflection and collective understanding of actual principles of practice” (p. 93). A key point about variation in theorizing about teamwork is the influence of context and this is particularly important considering the intrinsic conditions of the three countries examined in this study.

The benefits of teamwork in schools include improved teacher satisfaction and efforts, leading to more innovative ideas and effective uses of resources (Amorim et al., 2020; Main, 2010), increased teacher morale and motivation (Vangrieken et al., 2015), and augmented entrepreneurial behaviors and creativity that support more engaging and culturally relevant experiences (Amorim et al., 2020). Teamwork also promotes shared support in responses to diverse student populations and their needs (Bush & Glover, 2012). At the individual level, teamwork influences teachers’ altruism and moral commitment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015) and creates

opportunities for collaboration (Benoliel & Schechter, 2018). This last point is very important, as it has also been shown that this influences collective professionalism and commitment (Benoliel & Schechter, 2018; Takahashi, 2011). In this respect, Hargreaves (2019) argued that research has shown that collaboration positively affects student achievement, decreases teachers' reluctance to change, and leads to more varied forms of professional communities such as learning communities, inquiry-oriented groups, and school networks. Participating in such professional communities is essential for the reduction of teacher isolation that deters intellectual growth (Amorim et al., 2020; Benoliel & Schechter, 2018). Isolation is a pervasive problem recognized in many regions around the world that lack the proper organizational conditions for teachers to work collectively (Amorim et al., 2020; Gratacós et al., 2021; Vangrieken et al., 2015).

There are challenges and prerequisites for the proper and effective functioning of teamwork. Among the challenges, Vangrieken et al. (2015) identified factors such as lack of commitment, blurred goals and roles, personality characteristics, and time constraints. Additionally, teachers may be used to dominating or submissive practices that can be hard to change. The school structure, its culture, and leadership expectations may also become obstacles. In this respect, Svanbjörnsdóttir et al. (2016) noted that affiliation with a dominant teacher culture hinders some teachers in their efforts to become more open-minded and, to counteract this, suggested the implementation of strategies such as peer-coaching and feedback to support teachers' professional development when working collectively. Amorim et al. (2020) observed that, although teamwork requires various skills, those affecting communication should be prioritized, and argued that, without good quality interaction in healthy working environments, the exchange and flow of ideas and negotiation are deterred. The latter process involves not only sharing and acknowledging proposals but also being receptive to constructive conflicts, as these can facilitate innovation and shared understanding. When people join or form a group, this does not necessarily imply that its members know how to interact. In fact, Bashan and Holsblat (2017) suggested that prospective educators should be involved in practices that facilitate a better understanding of the nature of teamwork and thereby gain improved perspectives on roles, relationships, and expectations within a team. This implies the use of strategies to sharpen team members' communicative and social skills. As noted, Amorim et al. (2020) shared this perspective and added that teacher-training programs in higher education should incorporate preparation for teamwork in their curricula so that future teachers develop the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills needed to facilitate work in diverse multicultural contexts.

Contexts of the Study

This section presents a brief description of the current situation of teacher leadership in each country to highlight implications for understanding the meanings attributed to teamwork in each context.

Colombia

In Colombia, recent policies aimed at improving the quality of education in the country have included different initiatives intended to encourage teamwork among teachers (Radinger et al., 2018). However, despite some gains in access and coverage, mainly in early childhood programs and primary school (OECD, 2016), various problems remain. Students' learning outcomes as measured through standardized testing are still problematic, as is the high number of dropouts, grade repeaters, and the gap between learning achievement in public versus private schools (Fundación Empresarios por la Educación, 2018; López et al., 2017; OECD, 2018). Colombia is a country with marked education inequalities reflected in a lack of relevant curricula and learning opportunities for functionally diverse students in rural environments and/or of Indigenous and African descent (Fundación Empresarios por la Educación, 2018), as well as, recently, for students who have immigrated from Venezuela. To address these problems, the Colombian government made great investments in teacher qualification initiatives (Brutti & Sanchez, 2017), though in practice there have been problems implementing these policies due mainly to the exacerbated emphasis on individual and isolated learning and a disconnection with the needs of specific contexts (Bruns & Luque, 2015; Vaillant, 2004, 2016). Other problems concern teachers' working conditions, including salaries and proper spaces, as well as the recognition of their work as professionals. This latter point underscores the importance of constructing the notion of the teacher as an intellectual who builds knowledge with colleagues and considering teacher networks as key resources that nurture educational policies in Colombia (Critancho & Pulido, 2019).

Recently, the "Let's All Learn Program" (*Programa Todos a Aprender*) launched in 2012 has tried to create a culture of peer learning and support (MEN, 2012) by using a cascade model, based on learning communities and situated learning, that seeks to help tutors and teachers at the primary level improve their practices in language and mathematics. Although longitudinal studies need to be conducted to evaluate this program's true impact, it is a deliberate attempt to promote social experiences that reinforce the notion of collaboration (Radinger et al., 2018). This is of utmost importance in a country, such as Colombia, characterized by highly hierarchical and centralized practices, centered on the role of the principal as the leader (Pineda-Báez et al., 2019).

Mexico

In Mexico, a focus on teachers' collaborative work at basic education levels has gained importance over the last three decades. It emerged as part of a framework derived from a deep reform of basic education intended to confront extremely low school achievement results that reflected problems of quality, equity, and relevance (Secretaría de Educación Pública-SEP, 1992). One of the pillars of this reform was

the strengthening of schools' pedagogical management through the promotion of School Technical Councils (*Consejos Técnicos Escolares*, or CTEs). These were intended to reorient organizational and administrative tasks and support the principal in fostering pedagogical discussions centered on student learning. In 2013, public policy gave new impetus to the CTEs by recognizing them as institutions that, "based on their specific needs and contexts, identify, analyze, attend, follow up and evaluate situations for educational improvement, for the benefit of students, based on collegial work, school self-evaluation, shared decision-making and the commitment to improve educational quality" (SEP, 2013, p. 7). Thereafter, the Mexican Ministry of Education, at the central level, establishes guidelines, contents, and reports for each CTE work session, which forces the Councils to adjust to the Ministry's terms instead of attending to the most pressing needs of their schools (SEP, 2013). However, the centralization and uniformity with which the work of the CTEs is oriented is a hindrance to school improvement. The promotion of collaboration imposed by official policy is problematic in a context in which the intertwining of union structures with the technical-administrative structures of the educational system determines teachers' career mobility. This leads to control based on loyalties to secure employment, which in turn generates a culture of individualism that undermines pedagogical work as a central issue in teachers' careers (Arnaut, 1998; Ezpeleta, 1990; Fierro & Paradise, 2013). The same organizational structure also privileges administrative tasks over pedagogical ones, which further debilitates teaching work and overemphasizes administrative and managerial tasks at the expense of pedagogical ones (Zorrilla & Pérez, 2006).

Teachers' teamwork in Mexican basic education schools is known as "invisible collegiality" (Sánchez et al., 2008, p. 55), which refers to teachers' collective efforts to solve immediate situations that arise on a day-to-day basis (Martínez-Cruz & Moreno-Olivos, 2017). The seed of collaboration in Mexican school communities does exist, but in order to strengthen it, Mexican public policies must pay more attention to giving voice to teachers' initiatives, ideas, experiences, and creativity, as well as to personal recognition (Flores-Fahara et al., 2021).

Spain

The restoration of democracy established by the current Constitution (1978) has promoted the participation of school communities in the governance of schools (LODE, 1985). The Educational Law enacted in 1990 (LOGSE, 1990), in which compulsory education was extended from 8 to 10 years (covering 6- to 16-year-old students), required teacher involvement in curriculum development to face the increasing student diversity in schools. However, it is only with the more recent Educational Law enacted in 2006 (LOE, 2006) that concepts of social cohesion and social justice were officially introduced. This responded to the socio-economic context of the preceding decade, which had included immigration and economic crises that emphasized the need to promote participation and collaboration in educational

settings to foster pedagogical leadership. Furthermore, school governments needed to respond to accountability issues that resulted from the pressures imposed by standardized testing, leading them to promote further innovations.

In the Spanish context, professional teaching cultures have been more individualistic than collaborative. Teachers usually enact their practices in isolated ways unless they are promoted to formal leadership roles (Avalos, 2011; Coronel Llamas, 2005). In fact, this culture of isolation (López, 2020) explains the lack of feedback from other school professionals, such as mentors, peers, and principals, as results from OECD (2020) demonstrated. Additionally, approaches to the selection of principals in public schools (67% of schools in Spain are public) are another factor that detracts from teacher leadership and inhibits collaboration. The selection and permanence (up to 4 years) of a principal implies the approbation of the teaching staff. Consequently, teachers can become principals and then move back to teaching posts, and such transitions usually involve an implicit pact of non-intervention in classroom dynamics and practices (Fernández Enguita, 2019). Public school principals experience unstable professional identities (Ritacco & Bolívar, 2018) and the influence of unions that see principals' autonomy as a form of intrusion on and confrontation with schools' academic freedoms exacerbates this condition (Bolívar et al., 2013; Hassani & Meuret, 2010). However, in more recent Spanish policy, teacher leadership has begun to be connected to teamwork and professional learning communities, as well as teachers' capacities to innovate in their schools (Gratacós et al., 2021). Such attempts to improve teachers' strategies for innovation have facilitated the sharing of their concerns, the search for good practices to improve teaching (Sales et al., 2017) and consequently the enhancement of teacher leadership.

Literature Review

Many countries have shown interest in educational reforms aimed at promoting teacher leadership and teamwork. For example, in a study of cooperation in teacher leadership a Lithuanian project called "Time for Leaders" introduced as part of national education reform, Brandisauskiene et al. (2019) found that the status of teacher leader was still assigned mainly to teachers holding formal leadership positions while cooperation remained a marginal feature of teacher leadership. In this context, challenges or limitations experienced in relation to teamwork were associated with teachers' self-confidence, image, and reluctance to participate actively in discussions. Accordingly, teachers were not yet part of a culture of dialogue and reflection, which could be explained by their being accustomed to pervasive autocratic practices and a legacy of teacher isolation. Hierarchical structures seem to play a strong role in the way school communities view leadership, as demonstrated by López-Roca and Traver-Martí (2020) in a study of two rural school communities in Valencia, Spain, where leaders were linked with members of management teams. This created a static notion of leadership and diminished opportunities for reciprocal and interdependent collaboration that also negatively impacted opportunities to

integrate families into the schools' initiatives. Steyn (2016) found that, to break this isolation circle and to create a culture of collaboration among teachers, it is essential to generate the proper conditions needed to encourage them to work together. Examining a South African primary school in which the principal used invitational education, a perspective centered on creating an environment that invites people to excel, Steyn found that when the principal became an instructional leader, used the four tenets of invitational education—respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality—and allotted sufficient time and structure, teachers were more committed to collaborative work. Extensive research (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020) showed that principals play a pivotal role in promoting teacher leadership by creating structural conditions that support teachers' work in their school communities.

Groote et al. (2015), in a study of Dutch teachers in Vocational Education Training Colleges, noted that teamwork processes such as task and goal interdependence must be present if teachers are to interact and engage in learning. Task interdependence “refers to interaction between team members required to complete their tasks successfully, while goal interdependence facilitates interaction needed to reach a team’s common goal” (p. 28). Both processes are central in stimulating feedback, dialogue, and a sense of identity and affiliation with the school. With respect to feedback, Groote et al. (2015) observed that teachers sometimes feel reluctant to ask for it, because it makes them feel vulnerable to criticism and personal conflicts. However, feedback is an essential quality of team learning behavior (Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018). Edmondson (1999, p. 353, cited by Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018, p. 476), referred to this behavior as an “ongoing process of reflection and action characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions”. Team learning behavior can be empowered by a good climate that includes trust and healthy relationships and through task and goal orientation (Groote et al., 2015; Steyn, 2016). Nguyen and Ng’s (2020) study in Singapore also supported this position, and they added that, for teacher-led initiatives to transition from “sharing” to “improving” and “spreading”—and, consequently, to support onsite professional development—teachers must support each other cognitively and emotionally. Moreover, Nguyen and Ng (2020) argued that support from principals and middle school leaders is also crucial for the success of teachers’ collective endeavors.

In some regions of Latin America (Fierro-Evans & Fortoul-Ollivier, 2021; Pineda-Báez, 2021) and in Spain (Gratacós et al., 2021), there is a notable absence of explicit reference to teachers as leaders, as well as of any examination of how teacher leadership is enacted in these contexts. Nevertheless, teamwork and its connection to leadership are increasingly visible topics, and studies carried out in Mexico (Flores-Fahara et al., 2021) and Chile (Aparicio & Sepúlveda, 2018; Rivera & Aparicio, 2020) have tended to concentrate on professional communities of learning, the ways that these unfold in practice, and their connections to teachers’ leadership development. The studies coincide in pointing out that professional learning communities foster the sharing and modeling of useful pedagogical practices and empower teachers to become leaders. However, issues such as trust among peers, good relationships, proper organizational structures, and support from school

principals, which are also mentioned in studies from other regions (Groote et al., 2015; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020; Nguyen & Ng, 2020; Steyn, 2016), must be present. Flores-Fahara et al. (2021) go further, suggesting that education systems should prepare both teachers and principals from the early stages of their professional development in matters such as distributed leadership, collaboration, and communities of learning. This would be of utmost importance in breaking the isolation that permeates school cultures in these contexts (Aparicio & Sepúlveda, 2018; Gratacós et al., 2021), in facilitating collaboration, and in strengthening the notion of the teacher as a respected and valued intellectual (Aparicio & Sepúlveda, 2018; Fromm et al., 2015).

Although the literature on teacher leadership is still concentrated on Anglo-American contexts, the meta-analysis conducted by Hallinger and Kulophas (2020) revealed increased research in Europe and Asia. They found that teacher leadership in Asia tends to be associated with teacher learning but that “practices are sensitive to institutional structures and cultural norms and that these vary across societies” (p. 534). Kelchtermans’ (2006) earlier review on teacher collaboration also pointed out that both collaboration and collegiality depend upon schools’ structural and cultural contexts. In his view, values, cultural norms, and micro-political aspects such as personal power and agendas or interests must all be considered when examining teachers’ collective efforts. This perspective is supported by Vangrieken et al. (2015), who proposed that openness to collaboration requires both examining culture and working on teachers’ mindsets. The authors noted that “without an essential amount of openness to collaborate, every effort pushing teachers toward collaboration may become lost in a culture of contrived collegiality” (p. 36). Nonetheless, such changes are possible. Mullen and Browne-Ferrigno (2018), for example, showed that, despite traditional structures in China, teacher leadership is materializing in teachers’ synergetic, collaborative, and creative pedagogical practices aimed at fostering cultural traditions and extending learning to global themes. Finally, Landa and Donaldson (2020) suggested that, despite the tensions and adversities that emerge in teamwork and collaboration, teacher leadership in those areas plays a vital role in school improvement. However, as Hallinger (2018) observed, the interpretation of any form of leadership in the school context, including that of teacher leadership, will always be subject to the context in which it occurs, a notion that extends to teamwork and collaboration.

Methodology

The objectives of this study were to determine conceptualizations of *teamwork* in policy documents about teachers in Colombia, Mexico, and Spain, to specify divergences between these conceptualizations, and to establish their connections with teacher leadership, theorized as distributed leadership. The framework used to respond to these objectives was qualitative document analysis (QDA), in which documents are understood not merely as expressions of facts but as representations

of social reality, including views of life, values, and beliefs (Coffey, 2014; Wood et al., 2020). QDA embraces a systematic process for reviewing material and extracting its meanings, gaining understanding about a phenomenon or an issue, and broadening the knowledge about it (Bowen, 2009). The framework fitted the purpose of this study, as it intended to expand the knowledge about teamwork in connection to teacher leadership by considering different contexts. QDA “is both recursive and reflexive as the investigator moves between concept development, sampling, data collection, data analysis and interpretation” (Wood et al., 2020, p. 457). The iterative nature of QDA facilitated the researchers’ reflection on contextual factors that influenced notions of teamwork in connection to teacher leadership and examination of concept variations.

Criteria for Document Selection

A total of 15 key documents (seven from Colombia, five from Mexico, and three from Spain) that referred to the functions, competences, evaluation, and professional development of teachers were considered for the study. The documents selected for inclusion were limited to laws promulgated by the state, the Ministries of Education, or relevant central authorities within each country and other official documents that described topics such as the preparation of new or in-service teachers, their selection, profiles, competences, and evaluation. Excluded from the corpus of data were specific documents of only local interest, as well as outdated or obsolete legislation and proposals for new legislation. Table 5.1 presents a brief description and justification for each selected document. A code that includes a letter and a number serves to identify each one of the documents from the 3 countries (C for Colombia, M for Mexico, and S for Spain).

Data Analyses Procedure

Researchers selected excerpts from the documents that referred to teamwork and teacher leadership and copied them to an Excel table. Other words that referred to teamwork or collective endeavors such as “cooperation”, “collaboration”, “teams”, “teacher groups”, “communities”, “learning communities”, and “communities of practice” were also used. The original words in Spanish were “*trabajo en equipo*”, “*cooperación*”, “*colaboración*”, “*equipos*”, “*grupos de profesores*”, “*comunidades*”, “*comunidades de aprendizaje*”, and “*comunidades de práctica*”. Once the fragments were identified, a thematic analysis ensued to identify emergent attributes from each specific context (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The researchers followed the process suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) that embraces three distinct stages: data reduction, data display, and data verification. In the first stage, the researchers individually codified each excerpt by assigning labels to the

Table 5.1 Description of the documents selected in each country

| Name of the document | Authorship and year of publication | Description |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Colombia</i> | | |
| Colombia la Mejor Educada 2025-MEN (C1) | Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia-MEN 2015 | Describes the strategies to guarantee the right to education for children and young people. The document was selected because one of the strategies is called “teaching excellence” whose purpose is to strengthen teachers’ professional development |
| Bases Plan de Desarrollo Nacional 2018 (C2) | Departamento Nacional de Planeación-DNP 2019 | Provides the strategic guidelines for public policies formulated by the Colombian President. It was selected because it includes a section describing the role of teachers and principals in the quality of education and because it proposes strategies for their professionalization |
| Guía 31. Guía Metodológica. Evaluación Anual de Desempeño Laboral (C3) | Ministerio de Educación Nacional de Colombia-MEN 2008 | Describes the guidelines for teachers’ annual performance evaluation. It was included because the document specifies the roles and tasks teachers must undertake and that constitute the basis for their evaluation |
| Resolución 06 mayo 2016. Manual de Funciones, Cargos y Requisitos para Docentes y Directivos (C4) | Ministerio de Educación Nacional-MEN 2016 | Provides the guidelines to guarantee an objective and transparent selection of teachers based on merits. It was selected because it specifies functions, requirements and competencies for each of the positions of the teaching career system |
| Evaluación por Competencias (C5) | Ministerio de Educación Nacional-MEN 2014 | Establishes the kind of knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and attitudes teachers must develop and that are part of their evaluation. It was selected because it provides the bases for teachers’ professional development based on their evaluation |
| Sistema Colombiano de Formación de Educadores y Lineamientos de Política-MEN (C6) | Ministerio de Educación Nacional-MEN 2013 | Provides the guidelines for teachers’ initial preparation and for their subsequent professional development. It was selected because it specifies key aspects for the preparation of teachers from “ <i>normalista</i> ” level to higher education and post-graduate degrees. |
| Programa Todos a Aprender para la Transformación de la Calidad Educativa (C7) | Ministerio de Educación Nacional-MEN 2012 | Provides the guidelines for situated learning and communities of practice to improve teachers’ pedagogical practices in language and math for primary students |

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

| Name of the document | Authorship and year of publication | Description |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Mexico</i> | | |
| Plan y Programa de Estudio de la Licenciatura en Educación Primaria 2017 (M1) | Secretaría de Educación Pública y Dirección General de Educación Superior para el Magisterio 2017 | It provides the objectives, principles, and contents of the initial training of primary school teachers throughout the country. It was selected because it sets the guidelines and contents used for teachers' preparation |
| Modelo Educativo Nueva Escuela Mexicana (M2) | Secretaría de Educación Pública, Subsecretaría de Educación Básica 2019 | It describes the philosophical and pedagogical foundations that guide compulsory education in the country. It was selected because it represents the most up-to-date statement on teaching in Mexico |
| Perfiles Profesionales, Criterios e Indicadores para Docentes, Técnicos Docentes y Personal con Funciones de Dirección y Supervisión 2020–2021 (M3) | Secretaría de Educación Pública 2020 | This document presents and operationalizes the criteria that guide both initial teacher preparation and teacher evaluation at the basic level. It was selected because it defines the teacher profile. It is the document in which the State defines its position on teaching |
| Reforma al Artículo III Constitucional (M4) | Presidencia de la República 2019 | Article III of the Constitution is the most important law in Mexico. It defines the obligations of the State on Education as well as the characteristics that national education should have. It was chosen because it is the most important public policy statement |
| Ley General de Educación (M5) | Senado de la República 2019 | These are the specific orientations derived from Art. III of the Constitution. It is at an intermediate level of discourse, methodological-strategic, and therefore connects the major constitutional orientations with curricular designs and other public policy measures. It was selected because of the strategic place it occupies in defining public policy in Mexico |
| <i>Spain</i> | | |
| White Paper about Teaching Degrees (S1) | Quality accreditation agency for universities (ANECA) 2004 | States the requirements to be accomplished by the Initial Training Education degrees in Spanish Universities |
| ORDEN ECI/3857/2007 (S2) | Spanish government (Ministry of Education) 2007 | It was selected because it establishes the requirements for initial training education to teach in the Spanish education system |
| Organic Law of Education for the Modification of Organic Law of Education (LOMLOE) (S3) | Spanish government (Ministry of Education) 2020 | A revision of the previous education law (LOE): regulates the Spanish education system, school organization, curricula, and teachers' accreditations to teach within each educational level |

Note: Spanish is the official language in all three countries

fragments that captured possible meanings attributed. The research team then met to compare and contrast the codes employed and to ensure consensus about the meaning of particular extracts. The researchers engaged in a dialogue that involved sharing and testing out interpretations mindful of the different contexts of the three countries. Based on the reflections and discussions held by the team and the consensus on the codes, some fragments were then re-coded. The researchers then applied axial coding, or the process of synthesizing and reassembling the codes into a central idea (Charmaz, 2006). Convergent meanings that reflected the attributes assigned to *teamwork* in the three countries were grouped into broader themes or categories. Simultaneously, the outliers became useful points for analysis, as they permitted the examination of unique features of *teamwork* and teacher leadership in each of the countries. Possible connections that emerged from this analysis were displayed in charts and graphs that were then discussed and completed by the researchers.

The researchers held several meetings to interrogate the categories that emerged in the light of the characteristics of each of the three contexts, and an overarching narrative to explain each of the contextual narratives was elaborated as the discussions unfolded. Researcher triangulation, or the constant comparisons of researchers' interpretations of the same data (McKernan, 2002), was crucial to ensure robust data analysis. The resulting categories are explained in the subsequent section, along with key samples that illustrate each category. The fragments from the documents have been translated into English by the researchers trying to preserve the original meaning.

Findings

The analysis of public policy documents in Colombia, Mexico, and Spain shows that *teamwork* (*trabajo en equipo*) is a diffuse concept. The term is used interchangeably with equivalent words in Spanish that refer to *collaborative work* (*trabajo colaborativo*) and *collegial work* (*trabajo colegiado*) and it is seldom connected to teacher leadership explicitly. In general, teamwork in the three contexts refers to a process of dialogue involving teachers, principals, and other members of the educational community. The aims of teamwork are to reflect on teachers' experiences, classroom practices, knowledge, and concerns regarding student learning. It centers on building joint responses to students' needs, the educational community, and society and focuses on pedagogical innovation and achieving institutional goals. The data show three central commonalities in the conceptualization of *teamwork* reflected in the documents across the different contexts. To illustrate each of the commonalities, excerpts are drawn from documents produced in each country.

An Instrumental Perspective of Teamwork

The documents present an instrumental view of the concept of *teamwork* that centers on goal achievement and sharing solutions intended to improve students' academic achievement and development. Although these are central aspects of teachers' work, and arguably involve the enactment of teacher leadership, other relevant areas in which the voices and expertise of teachers are also significant, such as engagement in curriculum development or involvement in broader institutional goals, are excluded. This instrumental perspective reduces teachers' opportunities to grow professionally as their dialogue is confined to pressing issues within the boundaries of their classrooms. This also diminishes the scope of teamwork because it limits teachers to holding conversations on pedagogy, leaving out deep reflection and discussion of other aspects relevant to their professional growth. This is essential to the conception of teacher leadership that underpins this study. As York-Barr and Duke (2004) proposed, teacher leadership should influence teachers at the individual level, as well as at collective and organizational ones.

[Teachers] participate in team activities and promote actions and initiatives that stimulate effective cooperation and productive participation among members of the educational community (C5 pp. 50, 56, 75).

The teaching staff develops proposals for pedagogical innovation and improvement of school management to support educational goals, as part of the school continuous improvement program (M3, p. 35).

[Teachers] design, plan and evaluate teaching and learning processes, both individually and in collaboration with other teachers and professionals in the school (S2, point 3.2).

The foregoing examples show that teamwork is understood to center on pedagogical tasks, especially classroom endeavors. There were frequent references to teachers working together to strengthen their pedagogical practices or to improve their teaching and learning repertoires but only limited mention of participation and involvement in decision-making related to the community or organizational matters. There were generic expressions that implicitly referred to building links with other institutions, the community, and local agents. The three subsequent examples illustrate this point:

Teachers and school administrators guide the pedagogical approach built collectively in the Institutional Educational Project -PEI-, know the curriculum, and promote the development of pedagogical projects that articulate different areas, grades and levels (C5, p. 92).

[A teacher] establishes a professional dialogue with colleagues by sharing knowledge and daily experiences that encourage reflection on teaching practice and the improvement of pedagogical work (M1, p. 24).

[Teachers] reflect on classroom practices to innovate and improve teaching work (S2, point 3.10).

Teachers as Mere Participants in Teamwork

In the cases of all three countries considered in the study, the data showed that teachers are summoned to participate in collective tasks. Attention is drawn to the word “participate” which implies requesting their opinions and contributions when implementing plans. Principals, the administrative staff, or central authorities call teachers to join collective work to implement mandated guidelines and policies. Such participation is only tangential and does not imply decision-making power in courses of action for the school, except in pedagogical matters. Thus, self-initiated participation, which is an essential feature of teacher leadership, is not promoted, and teachers’ active involvement and engagement are not implied, which could turn into a reduced sense of co-responsibility.

[A teacher] participates in improvement plans based on the basic standards of competencies, the needs of the context and the community, the objectives described in the PEI of the institution and the pedagogical projects of each area (C5, p. 86).

[A teacher] collaborates in activities that promote the exchange of knowledge, values, norms, cultures and forms of coexistence between the school and the community, and seek the common welfare (M3, p. 36).

The teaching staff will also participate in the pedagogical decision-making that corresponds to the faculty, to the teaching coordination bodies and to the teams of teachers who teach in the same course (S3, preamble).

Teamwork as a Top-Down Process

Although there is great diversity in terms of the physical spaces, times, and formats in which teamwork operates in each of the three countries considered in the study, the data indicated that teamwork functions as a top-down process in all three cases. The situation described by the category discussed in the preceding section (“Teachers as mere participants in teamwork”) showed that self-initiated participation is not promoted, and this may relate to the fact that, in all three contexts, it is central authorities that take the lead in inviting teachers to join collective work. In Colombia, this is reflected in the Ministry of Education’s “Let’s All Learn Program” (*Programa Todos a Aprender*). Mexico has the School Technical Councils -CTEs (*Consejos Técnicos Escolares*) that meet monthly with defined guidelines (provided by the central authorities) on content, tasks, and deliverables; while, in Spain, the collegiate governing bodies in schools, Teachers’ Council (*Consejo Escolar*) and School Council (*Claustro de Profesores*) are in charge of convening teachers two or three times a year. However, all these mechanisms seem to fulfill formalities rather than truly promoting teachers’ democratic participation and involvement in decision-making at the higher levels of power. In Colombia, although Teachers’ Councils (*Consejo de Profesores*) exist, the data considered in this study provided no indications about the provision of spaces or support within organizational schemes for teachers to get together to discuss, plan, and carry out their plans. This finding

seems to suggest that teachers' opportunities for collaboration and teamwork depend upon school principals' decisions and actions.

It [the "Let's All Learn Program"] comprises a set of interaction strategies for learning communities. It includes the guidance of tutors for groups of teachers in each school. The program supports teachers' training and includes the systematization and dissemination of lessons learned in difficult contexts (C7, p. 12).

Strengthen School Technical Councils (*Consejos Técnicos Escolares*) in basic education, as a space for collective construction and peer learning (M1, p. 102).

Title V of the LOE establishes that the participation of the educational community in the organization, government, operation and evaluation of the centers must be guaranteed by the educational administrations. It states that the educational community will participate in the government of the centers through the School Council. The teaching staff will also participate in the pedagogical decision-making that corresponds to the School Staff, to the teaching coordination bodies and to the teams of teachers who teach in the same school as well as to the teachers who teach in the same course (S3, preamble).

With regard to the divergences among the conceptualizations of teamwork in the three contexts, four themes emerged: *socioemotional aspects of teamwork*, *the evaluation of teacher participation in teamwork varies*, *a growing interest in learning communities*, and *the conceptualization of dialogical exchanges in teamwork*.

Socioemotional Aspects of Teamwork

Data from documents collected from Colombia and Mexico stress the importance of considering socioemotional and communicative aspects when working with others. In Colombia, for example, trust, empathy, being open to criticism, keeping a positive attitude toward others, and facilitating mediation and negotiation appear recurrently whenever teamwork is mentioned. Data from Mexico emphasize democratic participation and the importance of acknowledging and respecting diversity and promoting coexistence. Data from Spain also highlight aspects such as self-esteem and building healthy relations but only in reference to initial teacher training and not necessarily in connection with collaborative work.

Teamwork competence implies the personal disposition to collaborate with others and carry out activities for the achievement of common objectives, which leads individuals to exchange information, assume responsibilities and develop an active role in the resolution of daily difficulties (C5, p. 48).

The objective is to lay the foundations for building schools that foster collaborative and collegial work, peer learning and innovation, in environments that promote equal opportunities and peaceful, democratic and inclusive coexistence in diversity (M1, pp. 101–102).

Aspects such as self-knowledge, personal esteem, the ability to establish constructive group relations, solidarity and democratic attitude (S1, p. 195).

The Evaluation of Teacher Participation in Teamwork Varies

In Colombia, the main document considered in this study that provides guidelines for teacher preparation programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and that defines teachers' profiles (C6) does not include any reference to teachers' teamwork or collaborative work. However, other Colombian documents considered in this study (C3, C5) do include this as a teacher competence that forms part of the criteria for teacher evaluations and as a key leadership trait. In fact, the data contain fourteen direct references to the evaluation of teamwork in terms of teacher competencies for collegial work.

[Teachers show] ability to work cooperatively with the different members of the school organization and establish collaborative relationships for the achievement of shared goals (C3).

The data from Mexico, on the other hand, characterizes teamwork in terms of professional dialogue with colleagues that encourages reflection on teaching practice and the improvement of pedagogical work. Although the operation of teamwork is fully endorsed by the authorities, which receive evidence of teamwork performed, there are no formal processes of evaluation of collegial work performed by teachers. In Spain, the LOMLOE (2020) contains four references to teamwork, three of which are focused on the development of students' teamwork competence and one on teachers' teamwork.

A Growing Interest in Teachers' Learning Communities

In Colombia, the "Let's All Learn Program" (*Programa Todos a Aprender*) is beginning to generate the notion of communities of teachers learning together. Although the intention is to promote dialogue and the exchange of ideas regarding good practices, the program uses a vertical approach. The Ministry of Education provides assistance through external mentors whose role is to guide teachers facing problems in primary school.

Teachers' learning and practice communities are fundamental to achieve and consolidate changes in classroom practices. These communities are oriented towards the collective thinking of teachers in each locality to identify the appropriate routes and actions to improve student learning and the school climate as a whole (C7, p. 9).

The data from Mexico systematically refer to teamwork in terms of forming communities of teachers who reflect, deliberate, and make decisions in response to needs. Although this is equivalent to the formation of learning communities, explicit reference to learning communities or other forms of networks does not appear.

[Teachers] engage in collective professional learning activities in their school, which contribute to deepening the understanding of educational policies, contents of great difficulty for students and relevant topics for the school community (M3, p. 24).

In the data from Spain, professional networks are mentioned once in the LOMLOE but only in terms of administrations' initiatives (S3, article 102.4).

The centers, as spaces open to society of which they are a core element, shall promote the work and coordination with the administrations, entities and associations of their immediate environment, creating open educational communities, engines of social and community transformation (S3, 110.4).

The Conceptualization of Dialogical Exchanges in Teamwork

Horizontal dialogue and interdependency are characteristics of teamwork and part of the pillars of distributed leadership (Harris & Jones, 2012; Spillane, 2006). In connection to this aspect, the data indicate that while Mexican documents conceive collaborative work in terms of a horizontal dialogue and emphasize the need for attention to students at risk of exclusion, as well as issues of school coexistence, the data from Spain shows no reference to distributed leadership or horizontal dialogue. The data from Colombia do not refer directly to horizontal dialogue but do make some inclusion of the notion of distributed leadership as a way to foster collaborative work, which is evident from references to international literature and scholars on the topic. However, when examining national initiatives and programs, little mention is made of interdependence and dialogical exchange.

In recent years, the trend towards leadership development as a shared activity has prevailed. Therefore, in the educational context, leadership should not be restricted to the management team, but should be shared and distributed among different agents (C5, p. 47).

Teachers and managers, in a horizontal dialogue, plan, implement, follow up and evaluate an improvement path that focuses on student learning and school coexistence, with emphasis on those who are behind and at risk of being excluded (M1, p. 102).

Design, plan and evaluate teaching and learning processes, both individually and in collaboration with other teachers and professionals in the school (S2, 3.2).

Discussion

This study sought to discover the meaning attributed to *teamwork* as a feature of teacher leadership in Colombia, Mexico, and Spain and to identify points of divergence among the conceptualizations of this term in those three contexts. One of the main findings is that teamwork is understood as a resource by which teachers center principally on pedagogical aspects. This understanding of teamwork may restrict participant interdependency and may obstruct the construction of a sense of purpose around broader school goals (Gates & Robinson, 2009). As Harris (2003) proposed, teacher leadership should be a form of distributed leadership in which "conjoint agency in action" (p. 318) is stimulated. This implies that school development will depend upon the involvement of teacher leaders in different decision-making spheres. Although the sense of community and interdependence are mentioned in

the documents of the three contexts examined, they are more aspirational formulations than orientations on practices and processes that make it possible to operationalize them. In previous research, interdependency has been associated with a sense of commitment built on the need to respond to complex scenarios (Chapman et al., 2020) and understanding and sharing a vision and beliefs, as well as effective practices (Schnorr & Davern, 2005). If education in the three scenarios examined in this study is to evolve, it requires that policies recognize and strengthen the genuine conversations among teachers aimed at reflecting and addressing situations of concern for them in their daily work.

The documents examined in the present study do not highlight teamwork as a crucial aspect for school improvement, and teamwork does not appear as a prominent feature of teacher leadership in them, which may be explained because such concept is absent in the discourses used in the policies of the regions examined. This finding may connect to results from previous research (López, 2020; OECD, 2018) that identified a prevailing culture of isolation that characterizes teaching in all three contexts considered in the present study. Previous research has also demonstrated that, in real practices, teachers exchange their materials and help each other find responses to immediate problems, but there have not been substantial advances in solving problems in more complex areas, such as in community development or organizational matters (OECD, 2020). It could be that teachers have not perceived their work as a relevant influence on those areas because policies neither specify such a level of involvement nor establish routes or strategies that would promote it. If teachers are only marginal participants in teamwork, as this study reveals for the three contexts considered, it will be difficult to involve them in accountability processes. Leithwood et al. (2009) argued that there is a need to foster the notion that learning together facilitates improvement and that accountability should not be restricted to principals or headmasters. Consequently, teachers should be part of more powerful forms of decision-making, as suggested by Harris (2014). Attention should also be given to Polatcan's (2021) ideas about the need to enhance teachers' sense of agency when engaging them in powerful forms of teamwork and strengthening their capacity for organizational transformations (Harris, 2008). These issues require further examination in the contexts studied and in Latin America in general.

Two of the findings from the present study are concerned with the organizational aspects required to foster a culture of teamwork. Shallow or tangential teacher participation in many school processes and prevailing vertical structures represent obstacles to the promotion of teamwork and collaboration. Certain contextual characteristics may explain why cultures of teamwork are still in a premature stage in these contexts. For example, educational leadership in the three regions under consideration is still understood as principal-centered, with a top-to-bottom nature (Aravena & Hallinger, 2017; Pineda-Báez et al., 2019). Therefore, either the principal or the school coordinators plan, arrange, and structure teamwork for teachers, or the central administration, through legislative requirements, calls upon teachers to become members of a group. This is done to ensure teacher participation in school matters or in professional development, such as in the case of the Colombian "Let's All Learn Program", the Mexican CTEs, and the school councils in Spain. These

top-down practices, also known as mandated collaboration practices (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), have negative effects because they create a contrived collegiality that, as Hargreaves (2019) observed, enhances administrative power through the rigid time, space, and content structures used in the meetings.

The studied policies from Colombia and Mexico highlight socioemotional aspects of teamwork. Teachers are expected to be open to dialogue and criticism and to demonstrate assertive communication that fosters democratic environments. This is also essential for fostering collaborative work and promoting feedback (Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018; Steyn, 2016). However, the routine and mechanized work that characterize these contexts do not favor the development of those competences. This shows a possible disconnect between policy and practice and between policy and the resourcing of systems and structures that enable the implementation of policies. The studied documents from Mexico, for example, are very clear in referring to respect for democratic participation and even diversity. However, the way that collective work is organized, especially through the CTEs, standardizes content, deliverables, and specific tasks for the whole country, which shifts attention toward control, reports, and products at the expense of creating a culture of dialogue and openness between teachers. Paradoxically, the studied documents from Colombia include socioemotional aspects in teacher evaluations yet do not contemplate them within teacher preparation programs. The documents from Spain, in contrast, refer to strengthening prospective educators' self-esteem in preparation programs, but this appears more like a vague statement of purpose and not necessarily, something consciously intended to strengthen collaborative environments in schools. Yet teachers' socioemotional capabilities play an essential role in generating spaces in which teachers provide feedback to one another. TALIS 2018 (OECD, 2020) reported a reduced use of feedback that could be explained by feelings of vulnerability to criticism that teachers may experience (Groote et al., 2015). It is, therefore, necessary to foster the socioemotional skills needed to promote a healthy working atmosphere in which teachers can build positive peer relationships that lead to dialogue, reflection, feedback, and openness to share and collaborate (Amorim et al., 2020; Brandisauskiene et al., 2019; Vangrieken et al., 2015).

Another feature of teamwork that emerged from the data from Colombia and Mexico was the growing interest in professional learning communities as means to share and model pedagogical practices. In Spain, there is also an incipient interest in networking. However, as proposed in the documents examined, learning communities neither focus on the particularities of the context and culture of the schools, nor capitalize on teachers' knowledge and expertise. Therefore, this perpetuates the notion of the teacher as a recipient of guidelines and knowledge and continues to underestimate teachers' capacities for leadership and self-management. These findings are suggestive of a shift from the traditional ways that public schools in these contexts have operated toward new paradigms for enhancing teamwork as a means to finding solutions to local and global challenges. This would represent an important change, considering the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that all three studied educational systems operate in contexts of high social complexity marked by inequality, violence, exclusion, and high levels of migration

(Flessa, 2019). There is a need to break with the installed dynamics, anchored to the isolated work of teachers and strong hierarchical structures so that school cultures based on participation can become the norm and not the exception. It is important to note that these complex conditions act in paradoxical manners. On the one hand, they are part of a problem, because they mitigate against proper conditions and spaces for teamwork. On the other hand, they represent an opportunity to undertake collegial work because the challenges themselves exceed teachers' possibilities for individual action. In addition, teachers' deep involvement with students whose living conditions are marked by suffering, loss, risk, poverty, and exclusion leads them inevitably to consider teamwork as a means to survive the emotional and professional toll caused by these conditions. In a study of vulnerable Latin American schools committed to learning and democratic coexistence, Fortoul and Fierro (2011) observed that teachers with a strong sense of responsibility and accountability in school life shared their pedagogical beliefs, conceptualizations, and practices for collegial review and that this represented an authentic manifestation of distributed leadership in learning communities. Our study's findings are comparable to those of others conducted in Mexico (Flores-Fahara et al., 2021), Chile (Aparicio & Sepúlveda, 2018; Rivera & Aparicio, 2020), and Spain (López-Yáñez & Sánchez-Moreno, 2013) that suggest professional learning communities in these regions are beginning to foster the sharing and modeling of useful pedagogical practices and to empower teachers to become leaders. The analysis of the documents of this study indicates that the prevailing policies and structures do not support this to occur.

Recommendations

First, it is necessary to promote the recognition of teachers' intellectual capital and their role in the generation of initiatives and innovations in the three contexts considered in the present study: Colombia, Mexico, and Spain. Nguyen and Ng (2020) argued that such recognition is a fundamental resource for teamwork. This demands that the three countries diminish bureaucracy and controls that limit teachers' spaces for authentic reflection and dialogue. As pointed out by Schnorr and Davern (2005), teachers' collective work is not confined to sharing common planning schedules but implies sharing of a common vision, beliefs, and effective practices. Relinquishing power to teachers and providing adequate spaces for them to gather, reflect, discuss, and share will foster situated leadership. Thus, the present study recommends that teamwork in the studied countries be fostered through consideration for the historical, cultural, and institutional contexts of their schools and the concrete problems affecting them.

Second, teamwork requires attending to organizational aspects that make it possible to have, within the teachers' working days, quality time and adequate spaces

for the needed team dialogue. This condition, as Harris (2008) argued, creates the cultural conditions and organizational opportunities to foster distributed leadership. In this regard, the present study also proposes that both bottom-up and top-down teamwork approaches be implemented. Bottom-up teamwork gives a voice to teachers and privileges their needs and interests, while top-down teamwork supports administrative and organizational aspects.

Third, the present study highlights the need to prepare teachers and principals for teamwork and collaboration. Working collectively requires that both teachers and administrators be prepared to use their socioemotional and communicative skills to enhance meaningful dialogical exchanges. Consequently, preparation programs in the three studied countries should include greater opportunities for honing these skills so that teachers and principals truly create democratic spaces aimed at improving school learning and community development through sharing and modeling of experiences and practices.

This study suggests that there is a need to analyze the contents of new proposals for legislation to determine changing perspectives of teacher leadership as a response to the complex social problems faced in the three countries. It also opens opportunities to examine collaborative work that takes place in the margins, or what Sánchez et al. (2008) called “invisible collegiality” (p. 55), so that it can be recognized and strengthened by public policy.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine the meanings attributed to *teamwork* in public policy documents in Colombia, Mexico, and Spain. The results show that teamwork, as an attribute of teacher leadership, needs to be strengthened in all three contexts. It is essential to appreciate and call on the intellectual capital of teachers so that, based on their expertise and experience and through consensual dialogue, they can construct knowledge that contributes to school improvement. It is important to consider that the great complexity of the three studied contexts inspires conversations among teachers that take place “outside the system”. These conversations, as Spillane (2006) suggested, may be forms of distributed and situated leadership and can form the basis for teamwork that optimizes teaching. These conversations “in the margins” would be valuable material that further research should examine to form alternative conceptualizations of teamwork that consider local and regional contexts. This could also encourage authorities to, instead of maintaining formal, rigid collegial work, recognize and promote the creation of open spaces for dialogue among teachers that have an important place in schools and that allow for the flow of authentic forms of collaboration.

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Chapter 6

Systems of Support for Teachers' Collaboration and Leadership: EFL Teachers' Experience in Morocco



Mohammed Elmeski, Nour-eddine Laouni, and Aabla Biqiche

Abstract This chapter investigates collaboration and leadership among teachers in Morocco. Teacher collaboration is a strong predictor of collective efficacy and an enabler of student learning (Goddard et al., *Teach Coll Rec* 109(4): 877–896, 2007; Goddard et al., *Am J Educ*, 121(4): 501–530, 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2015). Nonetheless, in Morocco, we know little about how teachers co-facilitate quality learning and the extent to which they collaborate to sustain effective and impactful practice.

Using the lens of professional learning communities (PLCs), we examined the extent to which collaboration is a trait of teachers' professional practice, the alignment between collaboration and PLCs, collaboration and teachers' leadership, and the enabling and inhibiting factors influencing teachers' collaboration. The researchers administered a survey to 554 secondary school teachers of English. The results indicate that 73% of teachers reported involvement in collaboration. Compared to those who were not involved, teachers who reported collaboration have higher self-efficacy and more favorable ratings of PLC practices in their schools. They also reported more teacher leadership behaviors. For barriers to collaboration, rigid scheduling, lack of a collaboration framework, and schools not providing opportunities for collaboration stand out as the most named impediments.

Keywords Collaboration · Professional learning communities · Teachers' leadership · Collective efficacy

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Introduction

This chapter investigates the systems of support available to Moroccan public high school teachers to promote collaborative work and teachers' leadership. Using the lens of professional learning communities (PLCs), the researchers examine the modes of connectedness used by high school teachers to promote their impact, maintain professional collegiality, seek social and emotional support, strengthen collaboration to improve student learning, and sustain the resilience and resourcefulness needed to effectively discharge of teachers' administrative, guidance, and instructional duties.

The literature consistently underscores the centrality of teacher quality as a predictor of learning outcomes (Blomeke et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Hanushek, 1992; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2010a, b). Teacher collaboration is also a strong predictor of collective efficacy and an enabler of student learning (Goddard et al., 2007, 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2015). Nonetheless, in Morocco, we know little about how teachers co-facilitate quality learning and the extent to which they collaborate to sustain effective and impactful practice. To contribute to filling this gap, we surveyed high school teachers of English to help understand the extent to which:

1. Collaborative work is a trait of the professional practice of teachers of English in Morocco's public high schools.
2. Collaboration among teachers is aligned with the characteristics of PLCs.
3. Collaboration among teachers is aligned with teacher leadership.
4. And the enabling and inhibiting factors impacting collaboration as experienced by teachers of English in their respective schools.

We begin with a theoretical foregrounding of teacher collaboration. We first operationalize teacher collaboration based on Woodland et al. (2013). We then transition to an overview of the literature on professional learning communities (PLCs), the characteristics of PLCs as defined in Kruse and Louis (1993), and the drivers of teacher collaboration and leadership as anchored in PLCs. This is, then, followed by an overview of systems of support for teacher development in Morocco, a description of the research method, data collection, and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings and a reflection on their research, policy, and practice implications.

Theoretical Framework

This section provides a review of the key concepts in our chapter, namely teacher collaboration, PLCs, and a detailed overview of systems of support for teacher development in Morocco. It also provides a description of Kruse et al. (1995) PLC framework. The various aspects underlying this framework are delineated.

Teacher Collaboration

Teacher collaboration is operationalized in this study according to the Teacher Collaboration Assessment Survey (TCAS). We particularly ground the operationalization in the TCAS validation study conducted by Woodland et al. (2013), which identifies dialogue, decision making, action taking, and evaluation as key attributes of high-functioning teacher collaboration. These characteristics closely overlap with the attributes of PLCs.

Professional Learning Communities

Peter Senge's work on systems thinking (1990) was instrumental in making a persuasive case for the value of spaces where people learn how to learn together, whether in the corporate world or in schools (Hord et al., 1999). Senge's popularity has bolstered the case for the diffusion of the model of schools as learning organizations.

PLCs are a horizontal means for professional development. Knight (2002) pointed out that the development of wealth-generating human capital in the knowledge economy is contingent on continuous professional development. He noted further that "knowledge has a dwindling half-life, and that professional obsolescence will soon enfold all except those engaged in life-long learning" (p. 230). Knight (2002) insisted further that, unlike explicit knowledge that comes from books and direct instruction, a community of learners offers a privileged forum for professional development, affirming tacit knowledge, expressed in the form of context-specific information, through learning-by-doing and sharing. For this reason, Knight (2002) argued that communities are probably the most important sites of learning.

Fullan and Watson (2000) cited the combined work of Newmann & Wehlage (1995) and Louis and Marks (1998) showing that schools which succeeded in improving student performance in mathematics, science, and social studies aligned professional learning communities with a disposition to revise teaching and administrative practices. Louis and Marks (1998) further noted that in addition to more effective pedagogy, professional learning communities provide improved social support in the classroom.

According to Stoll et al. (2006), key features of PLCs trace their roots to the importance of educational practice in Dewey (1929), teacher inquiry in Stenhouse (1975), reflective practice in Schon (1983), "the thinking school" and the "problem-solving school" (Bolam, 1977), the "Creative School" (CERI, 1978), and the self-reviewing or self-evaluating school (McMahon et al., 1984). All these theories emphasize the central role of the teacher as a co-constructor of the know-what and the know-how of effective and relevant learning.

Studies of organizational learning highlight power as an often-unanalyzed element in the construction of the learning process in communities of practice

(Fox, 2000). In this regard, Lave and Wenger (1991) posited that the power dynamics typical of a group of adults involved in shared practice are different from the relations between teachers and students. They, for example, pointed to triadic group relations between masters, young masters, and apprentices. Using the lens of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which, according to Law (1986), has been heavily influenced by Michel Foucault's conception of power, Fox (2000) highlighted the dynamics of power exertion within networks and how organizations learn and grow.

Consistent with the merits of integrating the power perspective in accounting for how communities are formed, how they grow, and how they can also dissolve and reinvent themselves with different purposes and membership, it is critical to also bring in perspectives from critical pedagogy. Of relevance here is the work of Giroux and McLaren (1986) on the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals. Grounding their case for democratic schooling in the legacy of democracy and social reform of John Dewey, Counts, Giroux and McLaren defined a transformative intellectual as:

One who exercises forms of intellectual and pedagogical practice which attempt to insert teaching and learning directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle for meaning and a struggle over power relations. . . Teachers who assume the role of transformative intellectuals treat students as critical agents, question how knowledge is produced and distributed, utilize dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory. (p. 215)

We view professional learning communities as a key assumption underlying teachers' ability to act as transformative intellectuals. Giroux and McLaren (1986) cited a New England teacher as far back as 1890 who described teachers as living "lives of mechanical routine, and [who] were subjected to a machine of supervision, organization, classification, grading percentages, uniformity, promotions, and tests, and examinations" (p. 213). They included the testimony as part of their case for empowering teachers to act as transformative agents, not mere uncritical conduits of the dominant ideology.

Kruse, et al., (1995) PLC framework encompasses the academic, developmental, systemic, and social-reconstructionist foci of PLCs. The five elements of the framework consist of:

- Shared norms and values: The shared values that undergird the moral purpose acting as the North Star of the community members. In schools, shared norms and values are reflected in the mission, vision, values, as well as staff professional knowledge, dispositions, and behaviors.
- Collective focus on student learning: Education for all is meaningless if all does not mean all. Ultimately, teachers' know-how is judged by improvement in learning outcomes. This is a critical metric that informs the "what", "so what", and "now what" questions any PLC members should be asking to make sure they stay true to their moral purpose.
- Collaboration: The learning/teaching questions faced by teachers are myriad. The need to differentiate learning to fit the needs of each student will eventually burn out any teacher who does not seek or get support and guidance. Sarason

(1996) reported consistent concerns about teachers as siloed and isolated technicians who perceive little prospects of professional flourishing in a largely lonely profession. Collaboration fosters the sense of belonging and collegiality among teachers and can sustain the necessary focus to support student learning.

- **Deprivatized practice:** Deprivatized practice refers to structures that encourage teachers to lean into the vulnerability of sharing their strengths and doubts with their colleagues. Teachers who deprivatize their practice engage in peer coaching relationships; they co-teach and participate in peer observation sessions. They alternate roles of mentor/mentee, coach/coachee, and advisor/advisee as part of working with their peers.
- **Reflective dialogue:** Engagement in reflective dialogue develops self-awareness and helps teachers improve their practice by examining assumptions underlying their practices. This is consistent with the centrality of dialogue as a means for growth through relearning in critical pedagogy (Shor & Freire, 1987). For Kruse and Louis (1993), the degree to which PLCs prove viable and achieve their intended outcomes is influenced by: (1) school structural conditions, (2) human and social resources, (3) professional community and teachers' responsibility for student learning, and (4) intervening cultural context effects specific to school level and gender composition.

In summary, PLCs embody a cultural transformation approach to adaptive leadership that is at the heart of learning organizations. PLCs make it possible for teachers to act as transformative agents whose collective pedagogical efforts are aligned with wider efforts and coalitions to name and challenge the political, social, economic, ideological, and cultural barriers that perpetuate learning inequities and stem cultural and socio-economic advancement through education. This mission remains urgent in industrial nations, and it is even more pressing in developing countries.

Morocco's 2015–2030 Strategic Vision for Reform predicates meaningful and sustainable educational improvement on empowered and effective teachers, successful decentralization, and effective governance. PLCs may provide the learning and leadership building framework as well as the peer-to-peer accountability mechanism necessary for success on the triple fronts of teacher development reform, decentralization, and school governance reform. To better situate the discussion of teacher leadership and PLCs in the Moroccan context, we provide an overview of systems of support for teacher development.

Systems of Support for Teacher Development in Morocco: An Overview

According to Morocco's High Council for Education Training and Research (HCETR, 2021), 206,096 public school future teachers will be recruited by 2030. This represents 80% of the current total population of teachers in primary, middle, and high schools. As of the school year 2019–2020, the total numbers of teachers

and students respectively reached 252,135 teachers and 6,260,444 (MOE, 2020). The quality of teacher recruitment, training, and support will shape the future of education in Morocco in years to come. In this regard, four landmark policies have influenced teacher preparation since 2009: The Emergency Plan (EP) in 2009–2012, the Strategic Vision 2015–2030, the 2019 Education Act, and the 2035 New Model for Development.

The EP defined the criteria and processes for teacher selection. It paved the ground for the establishment of the Regional Centers for the Occupations of Teaching and Training (CRMEFs). Additionally, universities, for the first time, initiated a bachelor's degree in education. When CRMEFs were created in 2012, their mission was to serve as a one-stop teacher qualification platform. CRMEFs replaced the Centers for the training of primary school instructors (CFIs) that were established in 1956, the Pedagogical Regional Centers which had served pre-service middle school teachers since 1970, as well as the Ecoles Normales Supérieures (ENS), which specialized in training high school teachers since 1958.

The publication of the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 and the ratification of the Education Act 51.17 in 2019 reinforced the resolve to professionalize teacher preparation and institutionalize the role of universities as key actors in the process. The strategic vision charted the teacher selection requirements and the roles of universities and CRMEFs in teacher training. The Education Act (EA) 51.17 strengthened the recommendations of the vision 2015–2030 with specific provisions that are legally binding. For example, the EA stipulates that no one can enter the teaching profession without pre-service training. The EA also requires the training providers to streamline their processes to ensure comprehensive and coherent pre-service preparation.

Finally, the rollout of Morocco's 2035 New Development Model (NDM) represents the most recent milestone in the development of teacher preparation in Morocco. The NDM puts teacher preparation and support at the center of the whole system turnaround. It specifically recommended the creation of a Center for Excellence in Teaching that acts as a technical assistance and quality assurance comprehensive resource center to the universities and CRMEFs, as well as a provider of evidence-based PD to strengthen and certify teachers' professional competencies.

To summarize, teacher preparation in 2001–2021 juggled the time-sensitive need to recruit teachers with the equally urgent need to ensure that they are adequately prepared and continuously supported. If the proposed reform is accompanied by a social and human resources policy that teachers would support, the proposed upgrading of the quality, depth, and coherence of the teacher training programs could turn the corner on years of inadequate preservice preparation and decades of neglect of PD (Mili et al., 2021; Hassim, 2019). In the next sections, we show how the reform provisions are reflected in teacher selection, training, and support.

Teacher Selection

The selection process into an undergraduate degree in education in university program consists of a pre-selection of applications based on the high school diploma transcripts and an oral interview. For bachelor's degree holders with majors other than education, candidates with academic distinctions and a compelling motivation letter are selected and invited to a written and oral admission exam.

Teacher Pre-service and In-service Training

Currently, there are two pipelines for teacher pre-service training in Morocco. The most recent one is the university to CRMEF pathway that became fully operational starting from 2018 to 2019. As shown in Fig. 6.1, it begins with a three-year university degree aimed at building future teachers' foundational knowledge in subject matter areas, education theory, and languages. Graduates from the university can transition to a two-year CRMEF qualification program if they pass the admission exam administered in the 12 Regional Authorities for Education and Training (AREFs). The second pathway is open to bachelor's degree holders from non-education majors who can also apply directly to the two-year qualification program in CRMEFs if they pass the AREF admission exam.

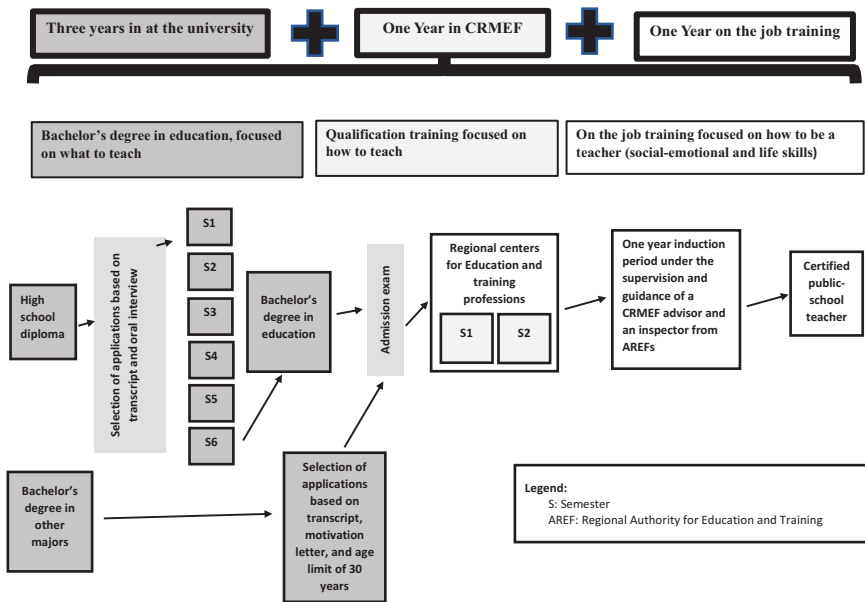


Fig. 6.1 Pre-service teacher preparation pathways in Morocco

With respect to in-service teacher training, MOE launched the Strategy of Professional Development (PD) in July 2021. The strategy is aimed at improving the governance and efficiency of PD by integrating quality assurance and expanding access to training through technology. In February 2022, MOE issued a PD implementation memo directed at eight priorities: (1) implementation of curriculum reform; (2) evaluation of learning and remediation; (3) supporting teachers in multi-grade classes; (4) improving language skills for teachers; (5) school leadership of improvement plans; (6) preparing for professional examinations; (7) co-teaching; and (8) using ICT in learning.

Internationally, McDiarmid & Corcoran, (2000), Cohen & Hill (2001), and Borko (2004) note that PD remains fragmented, poorly aligned with curricula, and inadequate to meet teachers' needs. In Morocco, Mili et al. (2021) found that PD is often fragmented, ad-hoc, not governed by a coherent quality assurance system, and not inviting to teachers in terms of PD content and schedules, learning conditions, and incentives. Similar concerns were reiterated in a 2021 report issued by Morocco's National Authority on the Evaluation of the System of Education, Training, and Scientific Research. Further monitoring, evaluation, and research will help assess the effectiveness and relevance of the new PD strategy.

Teacher Preservice and In-service Training: The Case of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Morocco

Teachers of English enroll in CRMEF with the same prerequisites as other disciplines. Teacher trainees study lesson planning, management, evaluation, and prepare a capstone research project. They also take courses in English language teaching methods and approaches, language awareness in teacher education, evaluation and adaptation of teaching materials, teaching skills, and teacher development and reflective teaching. The training curriculum is designed to prepare teachers to achieve their learning goals in teaching situations simulating real-life contexts. Training activities include discussions, group work, workshops, trainee-led presentations, peer teaching, micro teaching, and teaching practicum. In terms of learning dispositions, outcomes such as autonomous learning, self-reflection, self-evaluation, collaboration, and peer-feedback are explicitly identified by teacher trainers as part of their learning objectives.

Regarding PD, Dahbi (2014) argued for a developmental approach to ELT training which celebrates self-study and reflection. In the same vein, Erguig (2017) highlighted the importance of self-directed professional development, collaboration, and experience-sharing among ELT practitioners. One important asset of PD for English language teachers in Morocco are the professional associations. They represent professional bodies that were created, staffed, and led by teachers to serve the professional advancement of the ELT community in Morocco. Two prominent organizations that have strengthened collaboration between ELT teachers in Morocco are the Moroccan Association of Teachers of English (MATE), and The Moroccan Education and Resource Network (MEARN).

In addition to MATE and MEARN, teachers of other subjects have joined national professional associations that promote their professional advancement. These include the Moroccan Association of Teachers of Philosophy, created in 1967, The Moroccan Association of Teachers of Islamic Education, formed in 1992, and The Association of Teachers of the Sciences of Life and Earth, founded in 1994. Other associations represent teachers of social studies, French, Arabic, as well as principals of primary and secondary schools. Together with labor unions, associations have wide agendas ranging from staff development to labor organizing.

Teacher Supervision and Support

In 2016, the World Bank published a status report (World Bank, 2016) on teacher systems of support in Morocco using a policy tool called Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). The tool measures the following teacher effectiveness goals: (1) Setting clear expectations for teachers, (2) attracting the best into teaching, (3) preparing teachers with useful training and experience, (4) matching teachers' skills with students' needs, (5) leading teachers with strong principals, (6) monitoring teaching and learning, (7) supporting teachers to improve instruction, and (8) motivating teachers to perform. The SABER dashboard rates the performance of the teacher support policy system using a four-category scale, latent, emerging, established, and advanced.

The policy on teacher support in Morocco is rated as established in the areas of setting clear expectations for teachers, and monitoring teaching and learning. To be rated as advanced, the system should be explicit about the non-teaching tasks related to instructional improvement that occur outside the classroom. Teacher monitoring practices do not seem to inform their instruction. The system is rated as emerging in attracting the best into teaching and preparing teachers with useful training and experience. SABER recommends stronger and more targeted policies for attracting the best and ensuring that the restructuring of the teacher training programs is supported by substantive training experiences.

Finally, the teacher support system was considered as latent in matching teacher skills with student needs, leading teachers with strong principals, supporting teachers to improve instruction, and motivating teachers to perform. The national policy needs to prioritize targeted approaches to addressing shortages of teachers in critical subjects as well as in disadvantaged schools. Principals are still not expected to be involved in monitoring teacher performance and supporting its improvement. Professional development is not required nor customized to teachers' needs. Finally, teacher incentivization and promotion policies are only partially linked to performance as determined by the inspector and principal.

The SABER results are consistent with a 2021 assessment conducted by Morocco's National Authority on the Evaluation of Education, Training, and Scientific Research. The study identified three sources of teacher supervision and support: Coaches from their senior peers, educational inspectors, and school principals. Coaching was instituted in 2015–2016 to provide support for new teachers,

teachers who expressed a need for assistance, and teachers that were identified as needing assistance. Teacher mentors find it hard to sustain mentorship since it is not compensated by a reduction in teaching load or recognized by financial or promotion incentives.

Education inspectors are also tasked with supervision, monitoring, and training primary and secondary school teachers. Their ability to provide the needed individualized support is hampered by multiple administrative non-supervision tasks competing for their time, limited logistical support for school visits, coordination difficulties with schools, in addition to the increase in the number of teachers under their supervision. By 2018, the average ratio of inspectors to teacher supervisees increased to 1/170 in primary and 1/132 in secondary schools. Similarly, principals' role is to provide support with supplies and ensure that the school grounds are safe and conducive to learning. Even if they have the right to supervise classroom instruction, this rarely happens because they, too, are often the only administrators available, especially in primary schools.

To conclude, the overview of systems of support for teacher preparation in Morocco indicates that at the policy level, the country has important policies geared to improving the quality and depth of teacher support. However, policies alone are not sufficient if they are not accompanied with the necessary capacity building, monitoring, and coaching in teacher education institutions and in schools. In this regard, our review of the literature has not shown any significant role of the universities as research school improvement partners in Morocco. We also noticed that while teachers are encouraged to take on leadership roles to support learning inside and outside the classroom, the teacher training programs as well as the official memos specifying teachers' terms of reference do not mention teacher leadership.

By highlighting the enablers and barriers to ELT teacher collaboration, we attempt to understand the factors underlying this gap in the context of secondary schools.

Methods

Sample and Data

Data were collected during the school year 2021–2022. Given the relative novelty of teacher leadership and PLCs in the context of Moroccan schools, we deliberately chose to focus on ELT teachers in Morocco's public secondary schools. The ELT community in Morocco would be prime candidates for the study because of their active involvement in local and national networks focused on English language teaching. We acknowledge, therefore, that the findings are more illustrative than representative of the state of teacher collaboration in Morocco.

We used purposive sampling to reach high school teachers of English in all the 12 regions in the country. To ensure geographical and gender representation, we

coordinated with teacher inspectors who encouraged teachers in their WhatsApp groups to respond to the online survey. Teachers who consented to participate, responded to demographic questions, as well questions related to collaboration, PLCs, and teacher leadership. The demographic questions included age, gender, highest degree earned, teaching experience, and school location.

The survey included questions about professional development, involvement in collaborative activities, types of collaboration, perception of collaborative work, factors enabling or inhibiting collaboration, teachers' experience of the professional learning community in their schools, teacher leadership as manifested in perception of teacher roles vs behaviors, and teachers' self-efficacy. The survey items specific to areas of collaboration were related to the measurement of the continuous cycle of dialogue, decision making, action making, and evaluation as referenced in Woodland et al. (2013). Questions about teacher's perceptions of other teachers, teacher leadership and teacher efficacy, were adapted from questions 32, 33, & 34 in the 2018 OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey. With respect to the measure of PLCs, they were developed by the researchers based on the framework of Kruse, et al., (1995).

We also included questions about teachers' perception of support during the Covid-19 pandemic, their social networks, and the technology tools they use to stay connected and informed. The survey was developed in English and the researchers conducted six think-aloud cognitive interviews to test the items. Table 6.1 details the survey measures and their corresponding questions.

Table 6.1 Survey measures and corresponding questions

| Survey measure | Corresponding questions |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Demographics | Age, gender, degrees, teaching experience, school location (rural, semi-urban, urban), and administrative region where the school is located. |
| Teachers' professional development in the last five years | Teachers' participation in in-person or virtual PD, conference attendance, certification programs, school visits, visits to corporations & NGOs, teacher PD networks, training in collaborative work, and review of literature related to the teacher's content knowledge. |
| Teacher collaboration | Teachers' involvement in collaborative work with other teachers in their school, areas of collaborative work, factors motivating involvement, factors inhibiting involvement in collaboration, duration of involvement, perceptions of collaborative work among teachers, views of the professionalism of other teachers, and teachers' experience of their professional connectedness. |
| PLCs and motivation to collaborate with other teachers | Perceived impact of PLC characteristics on teachers' desire to collaborate. We measure shared norms and values, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatized practice, and reflective dialogue. |
| Teacher leadership | Teachers' perceptions of the expected roles of teachers other than instruction, areas of actual involvement in professional activities other than instruction, frequency of teachers' involvement in school-related activities other than instruction, and teachers' self-efficacy. |

Analytic Approach

The findings shared in this study are based on the analysis of the aggregate responses of the teachers as well as responses disaggregated by gender and involvement status in collaboration. Teachers' responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis as well as Microsoft Excel. We conducted descriptive statistics to help with the visualization of any trends and patterns undergirding teachers' responses.

Results

A total of 554 high school teachers of English from the 12 regions in Morocco completed the survey. 63.9% of respondents are male and 36.1% are female. In terms of degrees, the largest majority hold at least a bachelor's degree (68.4%), followed by 29.2% who hold a master's degree, 1.5% doctoral degree holders or on track to obtaining one. Only 0.9% have an Associate Degree. 66.4% of teachers work in urban high schools, 22.6% in semi-urban settings, and 11% in rural areas. Table 6.2 shows the distribution of participants by age. Table 6.3 summarizes their teaching experience by number of years.

To What Extent Is Collaboration a Trait of the Professional Practice Teachers of English in Morocco's Public High Schools?

As shown in Fig. 6.2, 76.55% of male teachers, vs 70.35 of female teachers, stated that they collaborate within their schools. Figure 6.3 shows that 59.5% of teachers who reported involvement, compared to 50.7% who did not, rated teacher collaboration as important and at the core of school education and management improvement work. Close to 30%, versus 26.5% of non-involved teachers, ranked it as of secondary importance. Interestingly, close to 23% of non-involved teachers rated

Table 6.2 Teachers' age distribution

| Age | 21–29 | 30–39 | 40–49 | 50–59 | Over 59 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Number of teachers | 129 | 214 | 150 | 55 | 6 |
| Percentage | 23.3% | 38.6% | 27.1% | 9.9% | 1.1% |

Table 6.3 Distribution of teachers' teaching experience

| Tch Exp | 1–5 | 6–10 | 11–15 | 16–20 | 21–25 | 26–30 | 31–35 | 36–40 | 41 + |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Teachers | 156 | 132 | 81 | 119 | 28 | 21 | 14 | 1 | 2 |
| Percent | 28.2% | 23.8% | 14.6% | 21.5% | 5.1% | 3.8% | 2.5% | 0.2% | 0.4% |

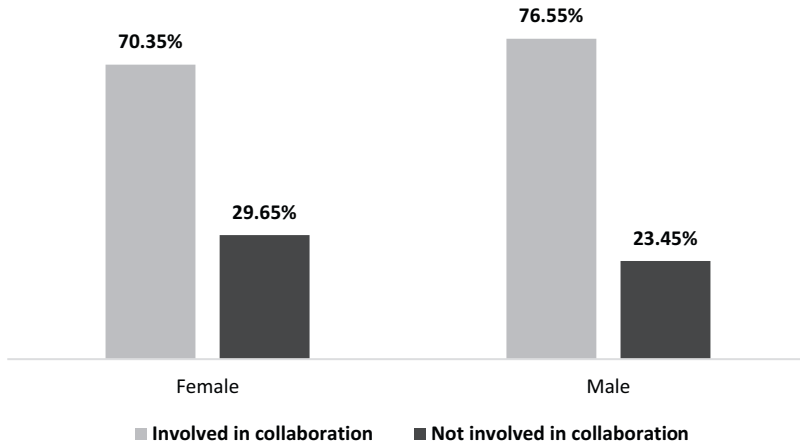


Fig. 6.2 Percentage of teachers who are engaged in collaborative work vs teachers who are not by gender

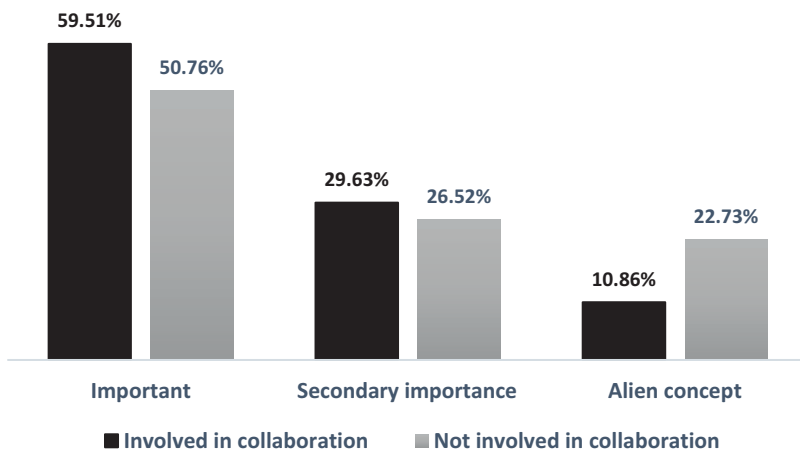


Fig. 6.3 Teachers' rating of the importance of collaborative work based on whether they reported being involved in collaboration

collaboration as an alien concept that has no place in the culture of work in Moroccan schools.

Figure 6.4 captures who teachers often reach out to for information. 33.5% of teachers reporting no involvement in collaboration do not reach out to anyone for information, compared to 21.7% of teachers reporting involvement. Teachers involved in collaboration relied more on online networks and at a higher rate on teachers in their schools.

Figure 6.5 shows areas of collaborative work. More than half of the teachers reporting collaboration are involved in extracurricular activities. One-fourth of the

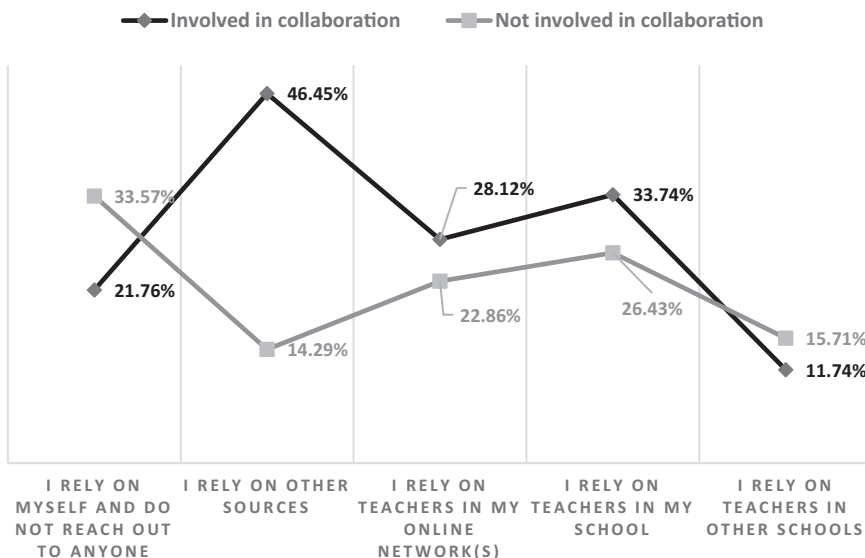


Fig. 6.4 What/who teachers resort to for work-related information based on their involvement in collaboration

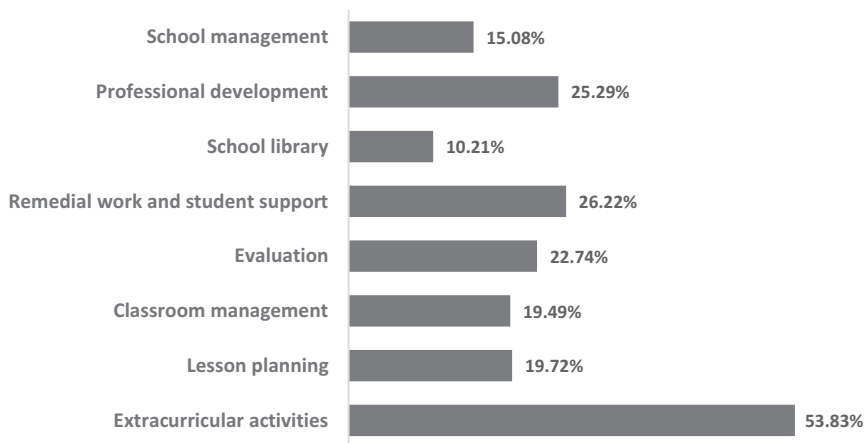


Fig. 6.5 Areas where teachers collaborate by percentage of reported involvement

teachers collaborate in professional development, remedial work, and student support. On average, 20% of collaboration activities pertain to learning evaluation, lesson planning, and classroom management. Fifteen percent are dedicated to school management, and only 10% are school library activities.

To What Extent Is Collaboration among Teachers Aligned with the Characteristics of PLCs?

Figure 6.6 shows that teachers who reported collaboration were more positive in their ratings of their experience of collaborative dialogue, decision making, coordinated action, and evaluation in their schools. To begin with collaborative dialogue, more than 70% of involved teachers agreed that they collaborate to improve instructional practice. Only 50% of non-involved teachers supported that statement. Moreover, involved teachers, for the most part, were more positive in their ratings of access to the meeting minutes, pre-planned agendas, and equal group participation with respective ratings of 54%, 50%, and 55%. For the other measures, the proportion of the non-involved teachers who supported them did not exceed 43%.

More than 70% of teachers who reported involvement in collaboration, compared to 52% who did not, rated their decision-making process as transparent. Similarly, 65% and 64% of involved teachers respectively agreed that their decisions are informed by group dialogue and that they use a specific process for decision making. By contrast, non-involved teachers with similar ratings represented 53% and 52% respectively.

With respect to collaborative action, data indicate that more than half of the non-involved and involved teachers agreed that it exists. Collaborative action is measured by equal distribution of actions, coordination and interdependence of team actions, clarity about what actions to take, and tying action to improvement of instruction and learning. Teachers involved in collaboration were consistently more

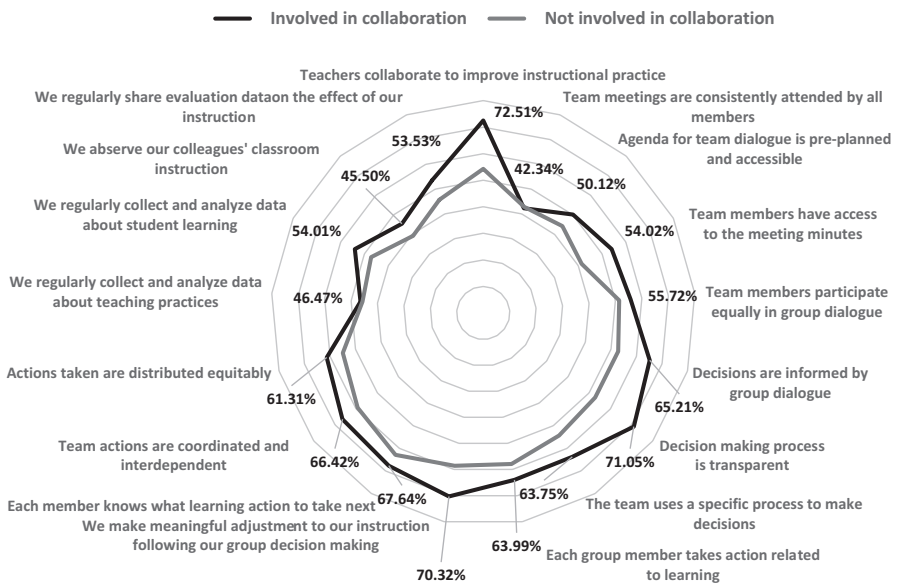


Fig. 6.6 Teachers' ratings of collaborative dialogue, decision making, coordinated action, and evaluation based on their reported involvement in collaboration

positive in their ratings of collaborative action. The highest difference between the two groups was in rating the extent to which they make meaningful adjustments to their instruction. Seventy percent of involved teachers agreed that they do that, compared to 57% of teachers who reported no collaboration.

Examination of teachers' rating of evaluation and focus on learning indicates that regardless of the involvement status, less than 50% of all teachers link collaboration to data use, instruction, and improvement of learning. 46% of teachers involved in collaboration agreed that they regularly collect and analyze data about members' teaching practices. Close to 45% of them also agreed that they observe classroom instruction of their peers. These ratings dropped to a respective 45% and 38% among non-involved teachers.

Teachers were also asked to respond to yes/no questions about the extent to which they experience PLCs characteristics. Teachers' responses confirm that teachers involved in collaboration are distinctly more positive in their rating of PLC characteristics pertaining to shared norms and values, experience of reflective dialogue, collective focus on student learning, and deprivatized practice. As shown in Fig. 6.7, 59.36% of teachers involved in collaboration, compared to 46% of non-involved teachers, confirmed that their schools promote shared decisions and responsibilities. Other pronounced differences in teachers' ratings based on their collaboration status include the support of the school principal, the clarity of the school mission, and the shared responsibility in achieving the school mission, and collaboration based on shared understanding of strategies to achieve school goals.

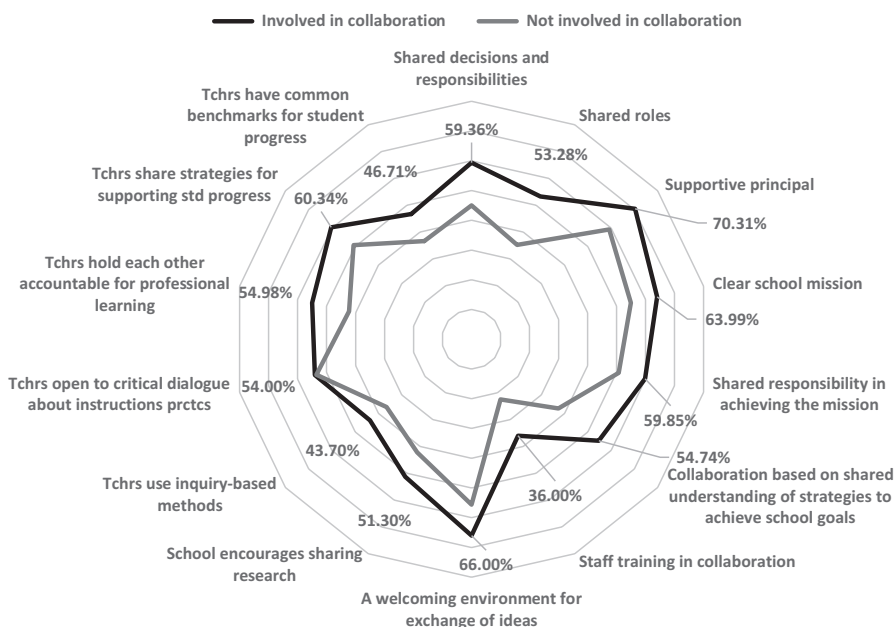


Fig. 6.7 Teachers' ratings of their experience of PLCs based on their reported involvement in collaboration

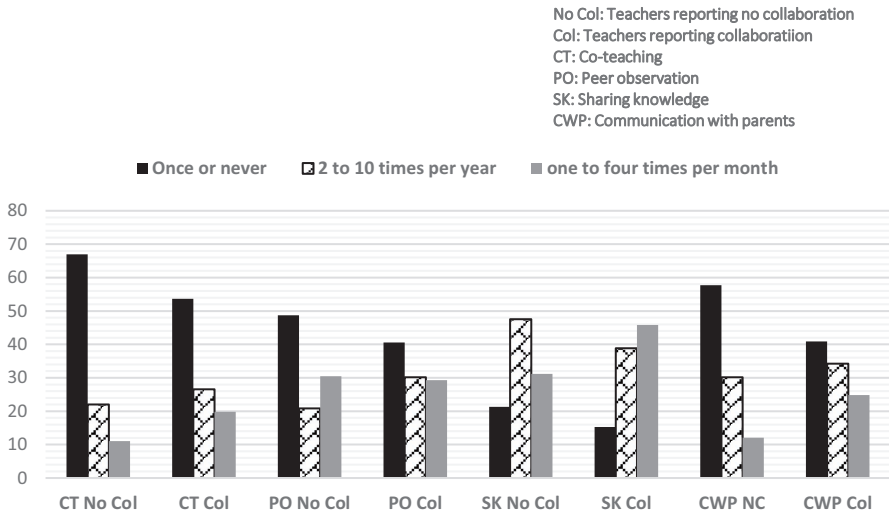


Fig. 6.8 Comparison between teachers reporting collaboration and teachers reporting no collaboration in the frequency of deprivatized practices

Regarding their experience of reflective dialogue, 66% and 44% of involved teachers, versus 55.6 and 53.5 of non-involved teachers, confirmed that their school is a welcoming environment for exchange of ideas and suggestions, and that teachers are open to critical dialogue about their instructional practices. With respect to collective focus on student learning, 60% of involved teachers, compared to 50% stated that they share strategies for supporting student progress. However, only 46.7% of involved teachers, compared to 36.6% of non-involved teachers, confirmed that teachers have common benchmarks for student progress.

For deprivatized practice, we measured the frequency of co-teaching (CT), peer-observation (PO), sharing knowledge about teaching methods (SK), and communication with parents (CWP). As shown in Fig. 6.8, teachers who reported involvement in collaborative work demonstrated more deprivatized practice, compared to those who reported noninvolvement. Non-involved teachers reported less participation in co-teaching, peer-observation, knowledge sharing, and communication with parents. 56% of non-involved teachers reported that they never co-teach, compared to 42% of teachers involved in collaboration. Similarly, 30% of non-involved teachers report to have never conducted peer observation. Eighteen percent reported to have engaged in peer observation once a year. By contrast, 24% of teachers reporting involvement in collaboration stated that they never engage in peer observation and 17% reported that they did it once a year.

Both categories of teachers are more engaged in sharing knowledge about teaching methods with involved teachers reporting higher frequency every month. Compared to 31% of non-involved teachers, 46% of involved teachers reported that they engage in knowledge sharing once to four times per month. Finally, 59% of teachers who collaborate communicate at least 2 times per year with parents, compared to 42% of teachers not engaged in collaboration.

To What Extent Is Collaboration among Teachers Aligned with Teacher Leadership?

Figure 6.9 shows that teachers reporting more involvement in collaboration also reported more engagement in leadership activities above and beyond their typical teaching duties. Areas where the differences were the highest include mentoring new teachers, facilitating extra-curricular activities, conducting research, and facilitating knowledge-sharing events.

Teachers' self-efficacy was also higher among teachers reporting collaboration versus those who did not. 93.2% of teachers who collaborate, compared to 90.8 who are not involved in collaboration, reported that they are fully able or able most of the time to provide alternative explanations when students do not understand. This is the smallest gap between the two groups. For the other measures, the average difference between teachers who collaborate and those who do not is 8.94 percentage points in their ratings of their ability to promote student self-confidence, to motivate students to learn, to stimulate students' critical thinking, to control disruptive behavior, to vary assessment strategies, to differentiate instruction, and to use technology. This clearly shows that collaboration status accounts for teacher leadership as demonstrated by the higher self-efficacy of teachers who are involved in collaborative activities.

Figure 6.10 indicates the difference in self-efficacy between involved teachers, vs non-involved ones in collaboration. Teachers reporting more involvement in collaboration showed a high level of self-efficacy if compared to their counterparts who are not involved in collaboration.

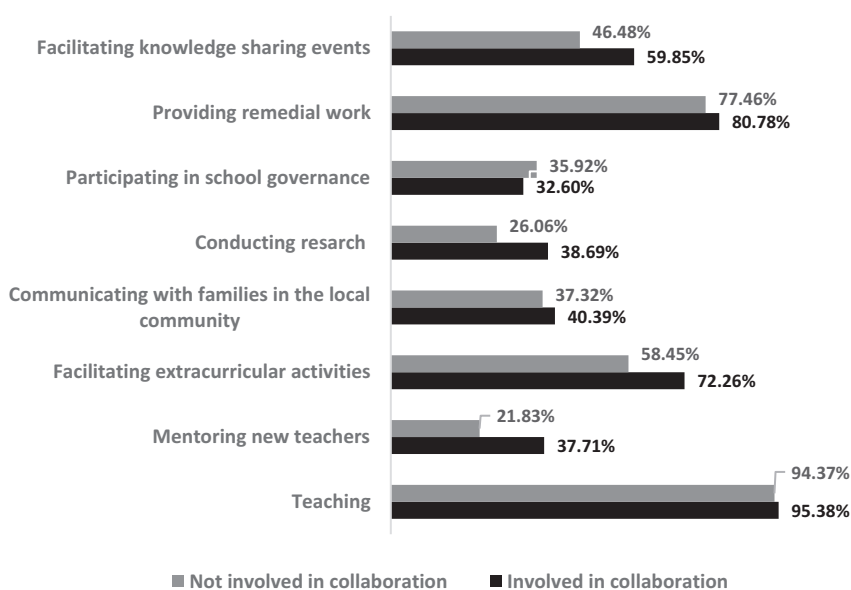


Fig. 6.9 Areas other than teaching where teachers reported involvement as reported by teachers who reported collaboration vs those who did not

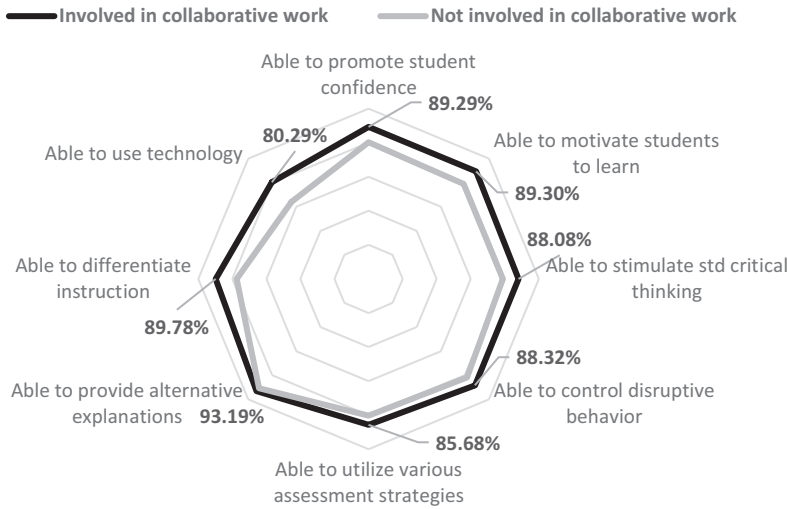


Fig. 6.10 Difference in self-efficacy between involved vs non-involved teachers in collaboration

What Factors Facilitate/Inhibit the Collaboration of Teachers of English?

Teachers were asked to rate the school characteristics captured in Fig. 6.11 in terms of their perceived effectiveness in increasing their interest in collaboration. For teachers who reported involvement in collaborative work, more than 90% rated a supportive principal as the most effective measure. This was closely followed by a welcoming environment for exchange of ideas, sharing decisions and responsibilities, collaboration based on shared understanding of strategies to achieve goals, sharing strategies for supporting students' progress, shared roles, a clear school mission, shared responsibility in achieving the mission, a school environment that encourages research sharing, training in collaboration, and teachers' openness to critical dialogue about their instructional practices. With respect to teachers who reported no collaboration, 90% of them rated as effective shared decisions and responsibilities, shared responsibility in achieving the school mission, staff training in collaboration, a welcoming environment for exchange of ideas, and finally teachers sharing strategies for supporting students' progress.

For barriers, Fig. 6.12 shows that a comparison of teachers' response based on their collaboration status indicates that the most prominent barriers to the non-involved teachers consist of the school not providing opportunities for collaboration. Related to this is the observation that the timetable lacks the needed flexibility to allow for collaboration. One more barrier is the lack of a framework for organizing consultations among teachers of the same subject.

The other concerns that were particularly shared by the teachers who reported no involvement in collaborative work include the lack of a framework for organizing collaborative work at the school level, as well as the lack of common projects that require collaborative work with other teachers. The same group of teachers also

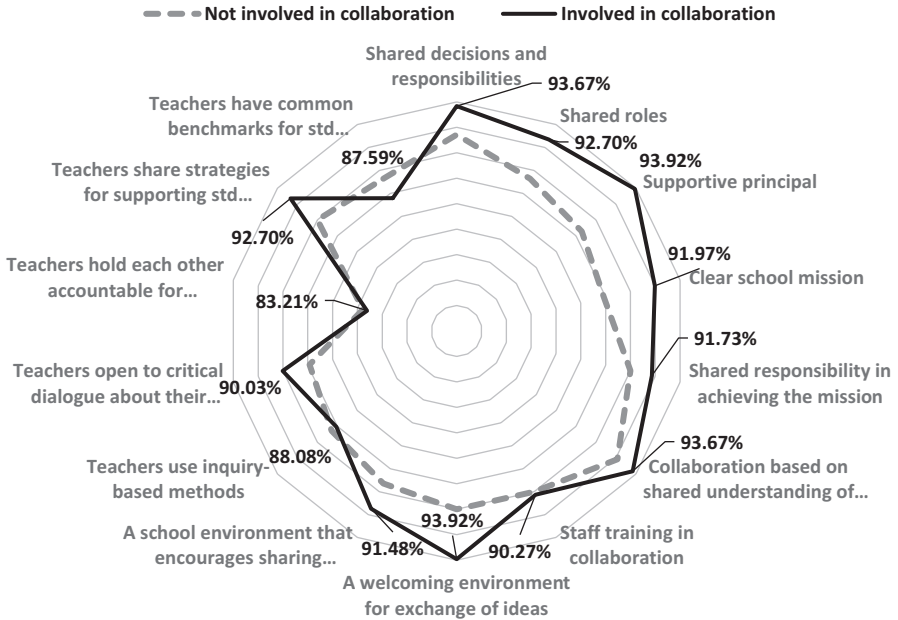


Fig. 6.11 Factors that foster teachers' collaborative work split by involvement in collaborative work

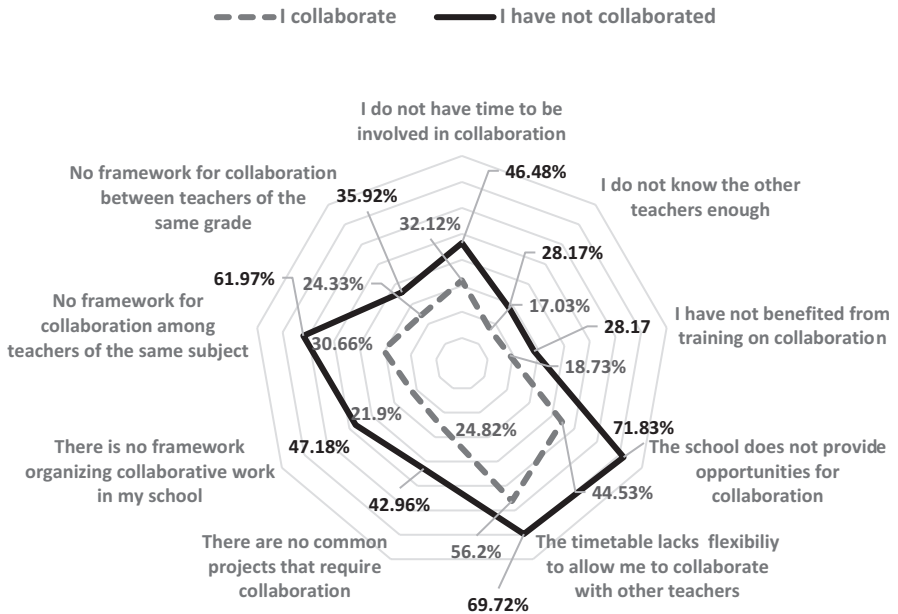


Fig. 6.12 Factors that hinder teachers' collaborative work split by involvement in collaborative work

pointed to the fact that they did not have time to engage in collaboration with other teachers. The dotted line referring to the 411 teachers who reported that they collaborate represents considerably smaller percentages in the identification of barriers to collaboration. The most noteworthy of which are the concerns shared by 56.2% of teachers about the timetable lacking flexibility and the school not providing opportunities for collaboration, 44.53%.

Discussion

Findings from the analysis of the teachers' survey can be summarized as follows:

1. Collaborative work is a trait of the professional practice of most teachers of English in Morocco.
2. Except for the collective focus on student learning, collaboration as reported by teachers of English seems to be aligned with the characteristics of PLCs. More teachers reporting involvement in collaboration confirmed practices of collaborative dialogue, collaborative decision-making, coordinated action, and collaborative evaluation in their schools. However, the PLC characteristic that was the least salient was the focus on learning. Less than 50% of involved teachers reported that they regularly collect data about members' teaching practices and observe classroom instruction of their peers.
3. Teachers who are involved in collaboration are taking on more leadership responsibilities, compared to teachers who are not involved in collaboration. This is clearly visible in their stronger involvement in extracurricular activities and facilitating knowledge-sharing events. With respect to other activities such as mentoring new teachers, communicating with the local community, and conducting research, they were also more likely to report engagement, compared to non-involved teachers. Assessment of reported self-efficacy corroborates a "can-do" attitude that is clearly higher than the group that self-identified as not involved in collaborative work.
4. The most prominent factors that teachers identified as enablers of collaboration include principal leadership, a welcoming environment for exchange of ideas, sharing decisions and responsibilities, collaboration based on shared understanding of strategies for supporting students' progress, shared roles, a clear school mission, shared responsibility in achieving the mission, a school environment that encourages research sharing, training in collaboration, and teachers' openness to critical dialogue about teachers' instructional practices.
5. The barriers that stood out the most among teachers who reported noninvolvement in collaboration are related to the school not providing opportunities for collaboration, a timetable lacking the needed flexibility, and the lack of a framework organizing consultation among teachers of the same subject. To a lesser extent, they also pointed to the lack of a framework for organizing collaborative work at the school level, the lack of common projects that require collaborative work with other teachers, and not having enough time to engage with other teachers.

The findings indicate that the group of teachers reporting collaboration is clearly different from the teachers who are not involved in the extent to which they value collaboration, the breadth of their social networks, their experience of PLC characteristics in their schools, their enactment of teacher leadership behaviors, and their higher sense of self-efficacy. Among the teachers reporting non-involvement in collaboration, there were concerns about barriers pertaining to the lack of opportunities for collaboration, a non-accommodating timetable, and lack of a framework organizing consultations among teachers. These concerns necessitate more intentionality from school leadership in creating the conditions conducive to teacher collaboration. This also entails an organizational structure where collaboration is experienced as a synergy framework that lightens the overall workload and improves teachers' efficacy.

Regardless of their collaboration status, ninety percent of the teachers agreed that staff training in collaboration is necessary to strengthen a collaboration culture. This reflects a shared need for support and guidance that helps the teachers experience the virtues of collaborative work and raises awareness of the changes in mindset that such an approach entail. Two related areas that require targeted support are deprivatized practice and collective focus on students' learning. Results are inconsistent regarding the rating of teachers collaborating on collecting and using data to improve teaching practices and learning. This also applied to instances of deprivatized practice such as teachers holding each other accountable for professional learning, peer-observation, and co-teaching.

Learning is the educational bottom-line. If collaboration is not tied to learning, then it is missing its *raison d'être* in educational settings. More efforts from the multiple systems of support for teachers need to converge on cultivating the knowledge, behaviors, and dispositions that foster deliberateness and intentionality about teachers building the collaborative and meta-cognitive competencies to learn how to learn and ensure that the learning ensuing from professional learning communities serves the growth interests of students. At the school level, the task of leaders is paramount. Principals as well as teacher leaders should collectively steer collaboration in the direction of the improvement of the academic and functional outcomes of all students. As detailed in Louis et al. (1996), a shift that nurtures PLCs should be cognizant of the underlying assumptions that protect their feasibility. These include the structural conditions, human and community resources provisions, learning centeredness, all nested in an enabling culture that promotes collaboration and teamwork, is committed to learning, celebrates personal and collective initiatives, fosters partnerships, and embodies the courage to learn.

Earlier in this chapter we highlighted how Sarason (1996) captured concerns about teachers' self and social perception as isolated and siloed technicians. This chapter has shown that about half of the teachers who reported collaboration and almost 60% of those who were not involved did not demonstrate evidence of deprivatized practice. Half of the respondents do not regularly conduct peer-observation or use evaluation data to reflect on the effectiveness of instruction. Less than half regularly collect and analyze data about student learning and member teaching practices. These findings strongly suggest that the instructional practice of

many teachers, even of those who reported collaboration, are still highly private and disconnected from what other teachers are doing. Teacher isolation is documented in other countries such as South Africa (Steyn, 2009), France (Marcel et al., 2007), the United States (Akiba & Wilkinson, 2016), Europe (Shanks et al., 2020), Australia (Stone & Springer, 2019), and Iran (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikahmadi, 2016). We do, however, question if this isolation is experienced as a lonesome experience, or if it is a desired state that reflects a deeply ingrained cultural meme defining the construction of the teacher's professional identity, or an immunity defense mechanism protecting teachers from the vulnerability inherent in deprivatized practice.

In France, Monceau (2004) captured similar resistance to the paradigm shift in teachers' professional identity from the pre-1989 traditional model of teaching as a one-person show to a collaborative deprivatized partnership that is at the heart of the school improvement plan. Deprivatization of practice in France is perceived as potentially infringing on academic freedom (Marcel, 2005). Given the colonial history and the strong presence of the French pedagogical tradition in teacher development in Morocco, concern about infringement on academic freedom could be the reason why some teachers are at best lukewarm about collaboration. In this regard, it's sobering to note that close to 23% of non-involved teachers rated collaboration as an alien concept that has no place in the culture of work in Moroccan schools.

Further research is needed to investigate the construction of teachers' professional identity, the organizational and cultural underpinnings of siloed instructional practices, and the related factors accounting for the non-salience of focus on learning and deprivatized practice as drivers of teachers' collaboration. This study has shown that teachers identified supportive principals, shared decisions and responsibilities, training, and a welcoming environment for exchange of ideas as important enablers of collaboration.

Our review of the teacher pre-service teacher development programs also reveals that there is not a single module that addresses the evolution of teacher identity and what it means to be an effective and relevant teacher for increasingly digitally connected students in what Klaus Schwab (2004), the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, calls the fourth industrial revolution. Pre-service teacher preparation programs in Morocco can cultivate the readiness for collaborative work among teachers when the training programs nurture a learning ground for a new teacher identity that seeks collaboration, deprivatized practice, and intentionality about student learning as defining anchors of the teachers' knowledge, behaviors, and dispositions.

Like any cultural transformation, collaboration implies trade-offs in terms of ceding full individual control for a more deprivatized approach to instruction that recognizes that teamwork unlocks synergies direly needed in today's complex and differentiated learning environments. It is, therefore, a transformative resocialization process associated with what Kanter (2012) identified as the ten reasons people resist change. Seven of them that seem to be most relevant to teachers in Morocco are loss of control, excess uncertainty, surprising change mandates, different work demands, the risk of loss of face, the related concern about competence, and work overload. In addition to organizational factors, these factors may also underpin what Kegan & Lahey (2009) described as immunity to change.

In summary, secondary school teachers of English in Morocco have for the most part demonstrated beliefs, knowledge, and dispositions that are conducive to collaboration. However, more research is needed to capitalize on the clear interest in collaborative work to help transform schools to fully functioning professional learning communities. Emphasis needs to be placed on providing the needed support structures for teachers to welcome deprivatized practice as means of continuous growth and ensuring that the good intentions that spur collaboration do, in fact, translate into equitable quality learning opportunities for all.

Educational Importance of This Research for Theory, Policy, and Practice

Investigating PLCs in Morocco lies at the heart of the quest to understand the reality of teacher collaboration. It reflects a cognizance of the complexity of learning in contexts where schools are often under-resourced, and teachers are often understaffed and over-stretched. It seeks to promote teachers' collective agency and leadership as well as support the cohesiveness and well-being of the teaching corps. The current study contributes to research on teacher leadership and PLCs because it investigates PLC implementation in a country where research on the subject remains sparse. At the level of practice, understanding the implementation context of PLCs in Morocco will help highlight key aspects of teacher leadership development that could account for the limited buy-in of teachers in the national school improvement plan policies as well as illuminate the gap between input investments in teacher training and the persistently poor learning outcomes throughout Morocco's K-12 education system.

From a practice standpoint, the results from this study have clearly shown the disconnect between collaboration and collective focus on student learning. Teachers are rightly calling for purposeful capacity building that strengthens collaboration. Both pre-service and in-service training programs should create spaces where teachers as well as administrators and school principals understand the virtues of collaboration and are also mindful of the organizational, cultural, and interpersonal shifts that will need to occur to ensure that collaboration enhances learning.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the emerging literature on teacher leadership in Morocco, the Middle East, and North Africa. It has addressed teacher leadership and professional learning communities, which are relatively novel concepts in school reform in Morocco. The survey of high school teachers of English shows that they are familiar with collaboration and many of them are engaged in collaborative

activities. However, we also learned that collaboration for learning is not as salient. Future studies are needed to understand the factors accounting for this gap. Future studies could also focus on schools as units of analysis and examine how PLCs are integrated in their school improvement plans.

Finally, this chapter has focused on secondary school teachers of English. More studies could investigate teacher leadership and PLCs in primary schools to examine how primary school teachers carve their margin for maneuver as leaders in often difficult conditions characterized by teaching all subjects to multiple grades in often isolated rural schools. Working with the teachers of English as a foreign language in Morocco secondary schools, we have seen evidence of the desire to collaborate and participate in leadership initiatives. Providing them with the support structures that acknowledge, nurture, reward, and further develop their involvement is a road less traveled that holds the promise of tapping the key levers of self-sustaining, deep, and school-based improvement in Morocco. It is an improvement journey that signals a needed paradigm shift from a command-and-control bureaucratic philosophy into a bottom-up and a middle-out distributed leadership model where transformation is a co-constructive process deriving its meaningfulness and authenticity from teachers co-leading the experimentation and pursuit of innovative solutions that they are invested in and are willing to support. That is a journey worth taking!

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Chapter 7

Tensions for Teacher Leaders: Insights from Document Analysis in Alberta, Canada



Charles F. Webber and Jodi Nickel

Abstract As part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* (www.mru.ca/istl), a document analysis was conducted to determine how teacher leadership is represented in the official documentation of key educational stakeholders in Alberta, Canada.

Six themes emerged from the researchers' document analysis: foundational understandings, student diversity, twenty-first-century competencies, innovative curriculum and student engagement, community engagement, and reflection and professional learning. Analysis of the idealized themes resulted in the identification of issues that may challenge teacher leaders. For example, professional tensions may emerge between teacher leaders seeking to implement innovative pedagogies and parents and colleagues with conflicting expectations. Cultivating citizenship skills in a context of ambiguity, rapid change, and diversity may be complicated by alienation among community members and political leaders who themselves struggle with changing social, political, and environmental forces.

It is unlikely that teacher leaders could demonstrate competence in every theme area. Teacher leaders must necessarily prioritize some professional commitments to work sustainably. Several considerations were derived from the inherent tensions. The considerations were used to derive a composite profile of teacher leaders with the capacity to *serve*, *influence*, and *thrive* as teacher leaders.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Professional tensions · Document analysis · Leadership development

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Introduction

This report describes one component of a larger multi-stage, mixed-methods international study^{1, 2, 3} that seeks to contribute to the wider understanding of teacher leadership and of how professional development and university programs might contribute to teacher leadership knowledge and skill development. The primary research question for the study is *How is teacher leadership conceptualized and enacted, and what are the implications for educational stakeholders?* This report summarizes how teacher leadership is represented in the official documentation of key educational stakeholders in Alberta, Canada, and it highlights the tensions and key considerations inherent in the diverse perspectives represented in a sample of stakeholder documents.

Definitions of teacher leadership continue to evolve. One description is that it is the school-wide influence that can be exercised by teachers, not in formal leadership roles, who engage with school restructuring and interdisciplinary curriculum planning (Little, 1995). Another is that teacher leadership is the result of the shifting of power and control to teachers who are supported by principals so that leadership is reciprocal and inclusive of all adults in a school (Lambert, 2003, 2007). Harris (2003) suggested that teacher leadership can be viewed as distributed leadership that allows school staff to share a sense of agency and purpose. York-Barr and Duke (2004) described teacher leadership as the influence of teachers on members of school communities to enhance teaching and learning with the goal of improved student learning and achievement. More recently, Wenner and Campbell (2017) described teacher leaders as teachers who continue with classroom-based responsibilities while also fulfilling leadership responsibilities in the larger school community.

Changing contexts of teacher leadership in recent years have contributed to evolving definitions. For example, Hajisoteriou et al. (2018) noted the “intensified migration, globalization, and super cultural diversity” (p. 95) that require educators to address cultural multiplicity and transnationalism, confront social inequalities, and foster intercultural competence. This view was supported by Wenner and Campbell’s (2017) call for the exploration of the role of social justice in relation to teacher leaders in diverse settings. Hallinger (2018) issued a related call for leadership research to expand to consider economic, political, and sociocultural factors.

¹This report is based on research done as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. For more information, see the study website: www.mru.ca/istl

²This chapter is an extended version of this report—Webber, C.F., & Nickel, J. (2021). Sustainable teacher leadership. *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership*, 61(1), 277–311. <https://doi.org/10.30828/real/2021.1.9>

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Study Relevance

Multiple researchers share the understanding that teachers are a key factor in school improvement (Andrews & Conway, 2018; Campbell et al., 2015). Even though there may be a dearth of evidence linking teacher leadership directly with student engagement (Mulford, 2008; Scott Williams et al., 2015), we know that teachers' capacity to influence educational improvement is enhanced through professional collaboration and open communication among members of school communities (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). Indeed, school-wide alignment of educational goals, community support, and classroom practices depends upon teachers and principals taking shared responsibility for pedagogical development and implementation (Conway & Andrews, 2016). Unfortunately, the lack of clarity about the theoretical base of teacher leadership, its actual meaning, and how it is enacted may limit its utility (Margolis & Huggins, 2004). Therefore, there is a need (see Fig. 7.1) to illuminate the dimensions of teacher leadership in different sociocultural, economic, and political contexts (Hallinger, 2018).

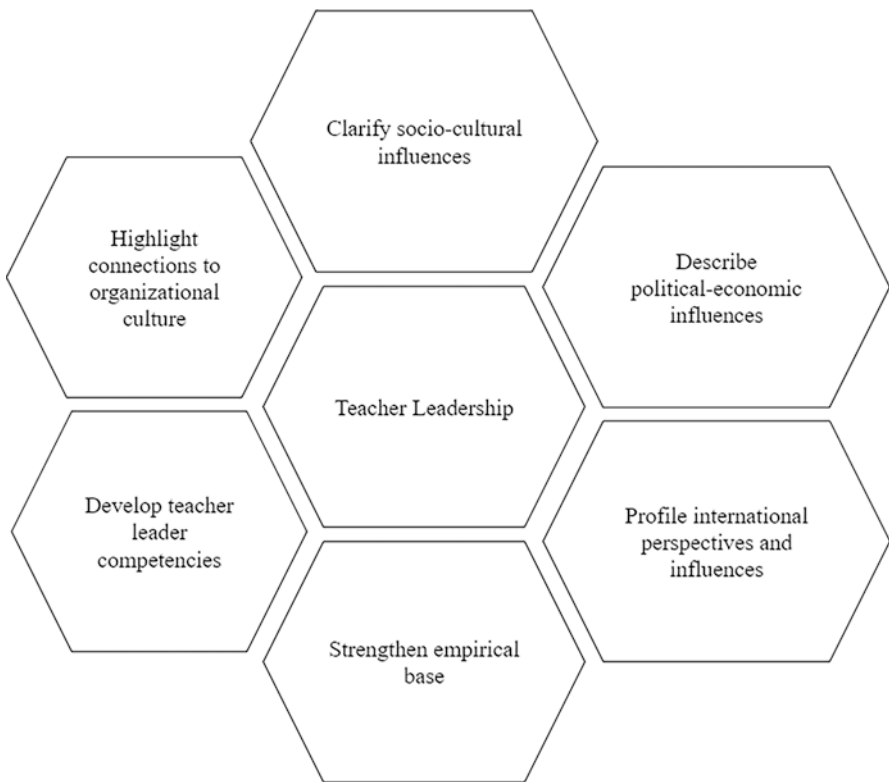


Fig. 7.1 Need for the study

International studies can foster common understanding of teacher leadership and clarify how differences in values and norms influence how teacher leadership is manifested. Teacher leadership development has increased significance because of the emergence of teaching and leadership standards throughout North America (e.g., Alberta Education, 2018a, b; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011). Thus, another important objective is to explore teacher leadership development activities and experiences that will enhance teachers' capacity to fulfill leadership functions in their school communities (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). Finally, teacher leadership is a useful construct because of its role in influencing organizational culture (Deal & Peterson, 2016), fostering school improvement (Teddle & Stringfield, 2007), and facilitating professional development (Steffy & Wolfe, 2001).

Related Literature

The challenges facing schools underscore the importance of principals and teachers collaborating effectively. However, successful collaboration is dependent upon the capacity of principals to disengage from managerial approaches to their leadership and to focus upon leadership development opportunities for classroom teachers.

The Role of Principals in Fostering Teacher Leadership

A frequent observation about teacher leadership development is that it cannot be particularly effective without principal support, which can be eroded in the context of a hierarchical school culture (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Principals may need their own forms of professional development to become more collaborative and confident in nurturing teacher leadership (Andrews & Conway, 2018; Smylie & Eckert, 2018). As Fullan (2014) emphasized, principals need to learn how to facilitate leadership by teachers.

Andrews and Conway (2018) described the leadership-focused relationship between principals and teachers as parallel leadership. This is a process involving principals and teachers in collective action to support school-wide capacity building (Conway & Andrews, 2016; Crowther et al., 2002). Andrews and Conway (2018) stated that parallel leadership is characterized by mutualism—shared trust and respect—between formal leaders and teacher leaders, and by a shared purpose and substantive amounts of freedom for individual expression and action. Conway and Andrews (2016) also noted how parallel leadership could become the foundation for school-wide pedagogical development and implementation.

Cautionary Considerations

The education literature is replete with descriptions of what Fullan (2014) called the “wrong drivers” for managing change. He listed the negative features as “accountability, individualistic solutions, technology, and fragmented strategies” (Fullan, 2014, p. 25). Stoll et al. (2015) suggested that accountability frameworks may constitute a challenge to school improvement. Holloway et al. (2018) shared a host of cautions related to their examination of distributed leadership. For instance, they described the focus of teacher leaders on accountability-related tasks rather than meaningful relationships. They highlighted the time limitations that curtailed teacher leadership initiatives and cautioned that mandated distributed leadership was perhaps founded on a managerialist mentality unsuitable for school contexts. In addition, they described the lack of appropriate professional development opportunities for teacher leaders and how teacher leaders felt undervalued and overloaded.

Clearly, there are sound reasons for problematizing many of the issues currently facing formal and informal school leaders. However, the magnitude of dire warnings about educational policies and practices may seem overwhelming, even debilitating for teacher leaders and their colleagues. For instance, Giroux (2016) warned that public schools risk becoming “dead zones of the imagination” because they have been “refigured as punishment centers where low-income and poor minority youth are harshly disciplined under zero-tolerance policies...” (p. 351). Graham and Neu (2004) suggested that standardized tests in the province of Alberta serve as a mechanism for producing “governable persons” (p. 315). Howe (2014) presented a politicized view of education in Canada by stating his view that “neoliberal and neoconservative governments in BC, Ontario and elsewhere are pushing for higher standards, stricter assessments and greater teacher accountability, in a race to the top” (p. 598), which he claims may cause potentially outstanding teachers to choose other professions.

In summary, there is a great deal to worry about regarding the future of education in Canada and elsewhere, and formal and informal leaders in education are right to deploy every possible strategy to ameliorate the challenges facing schools. As Angelle and DeHart (2016) stated, multiple reform policies have altered important dimensions of the education system. They suggested that teacher leadership is but one mechanism that can be utilized to address educational change. Furthermore, they noted that the attributes of teacher leadership, such as collaboration and shared leadership, can produce positive benefits for members of school communities. Similarly, the members of the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2011) created a set of teacher leader model standards intended to support collaborative teaching practices, enhance student achievement, and improve decision-making. The standards address seven dimensions of teacher leadership: fostering a collaborative culture, accessing and using research, promoting continuous improvement, facilitating improvements in student learning, using assessment and data for educational improvement, improving outreach and community engagement, and advocating for student learning and the profession.

Teachers and Teacher Leadership Development

Before teachers can take full advantage of their unique role in shaping meaning for the children and adult members of school communities, they need to engage in professional learning with their colleagues (Andrews & Conway, 2018; Stoll et al., 2015). Teacher leaders should be able to participate in formal and informal teacher development activities (Campbell et al., 2015) that develop their capacity to collaborate, exercise inventiveness, and become improvement oriented (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). In fact, Angelle & DeHart (2016) called for pre-service teachers to be exposed to leadership training prior to their first appointments in schools, while Smylie and Eckert (2018) suggested that teacher leadership development initiatives be differentiated according to “intellectual, social and emotional, and psychological maturity” (p. 560), so that leadership can be nurtured at all career stages.

It is worth noting that providing opportunities for teacher leadership development does not mean that teachers necessarily will engage (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). In fact, as York-Barr and Duke (2004) observed, there are numerous inhibitors on teachers’ engagement in leadership development. These include the traditional individualism of the teaching profession and active discouragement from peers when teachers emerge as significant influencers within their school communities. Even the usual shortage of time available outside of class to participate in formal and informal leadership development activities can discourage teachers at all career stages. Therefore, teacher leadership development may be most effective when it is accessible in a variety of formats at the school and district levels rather than further afield (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). Also, teacher leader skills need to be practiced in a safe environment where formal and informal coaching is available (Stoll et al., 2015).

Summary

Teacher leadership offers a framework for school improvement that builds on the critical role of teachers in fostering student learning. Teacher leadership requires supportive professional development and shared leadership with school and district formal leaders. It provides a pathway for teachers who wish to address more effectively the multiple challenges and opportunities that are part of the current educational domain.

Method and Analyses

“Content analysis has been defined as a family of procedures for studying the contents of written or transcribed texts which enables the researcher to include large amounts of textual information and systematically identify its properties ...” (Klenke, 2016, p. 94). To conduct the document analysis reported here, the researchers

created tables using the attributes of teacher leadership identified in an earlier review of the literature (Webber, 2018) (Table 7.1).

Then, a sample of public documents shared by some of the significant educational stakeholders in the province of Alberta was accessed. The documents represented some of the views of Alberta Education, the College of Alberta School Superintendents, Mount Royal University, the University of Calgary, Foothills School Division, Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic School District, Rocky View School Division, the Campus Alberta Quality Council, the Alberta Teachers' Association, and the Calgary Regional Consortium.

As each source document was reviewed, the researchers pasted key quotes into the table under the relevant teacher leadership attribute. For example, in reviewing the Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Professional Conduct (Alberta Teachers Association, 2019a, para 2), the following excerpt was added to the table under cultural responsiveness:

The teacher teaches in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background.

This quote is just one example from a code that guides teachers in discerning professional conduct and guides leaders who may need to direct professionals regarding appropriate conduct, in this case, particularly conduct with respect to the diversity of all persons. Related to the same attribute—cultural responsiveness—the Alberta Education *Teaching Quality Standard* (Alberta Education, 2018b) identifies

Table 7.1 Teacher leadership attributes and indicators

| Attributes | Indicators |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accountability | Take responsibility for outcomes Evaluation and progress monitoring provide focus |
| Advocacy | Student learning needs to provide focus Teacher leadership has an activist dimension |
| Cultural responsiveness | Curricula and pedagogy should include students whose identities have been insufficiently considered |
| Inclusiveness | Teachers should be part of decision-making Career stage considerations are important |
| Openness to change | Go beyond enculturation to build capacity for transformation |
| Professionalism | Teaching is always an ethical activity Teachers are the single largest influence on students' academic achievement |
| Reflection | Reflective practice should be ongoing |
| Risk-taking | Safety and trust are important |
| Shared vision | Alignment of goals and mission is valued |
| Stability | Practices should be sustainable |
| Teamwork | Professional learning communities provide a venue for collaboration |

Adapted from Webber (2018)

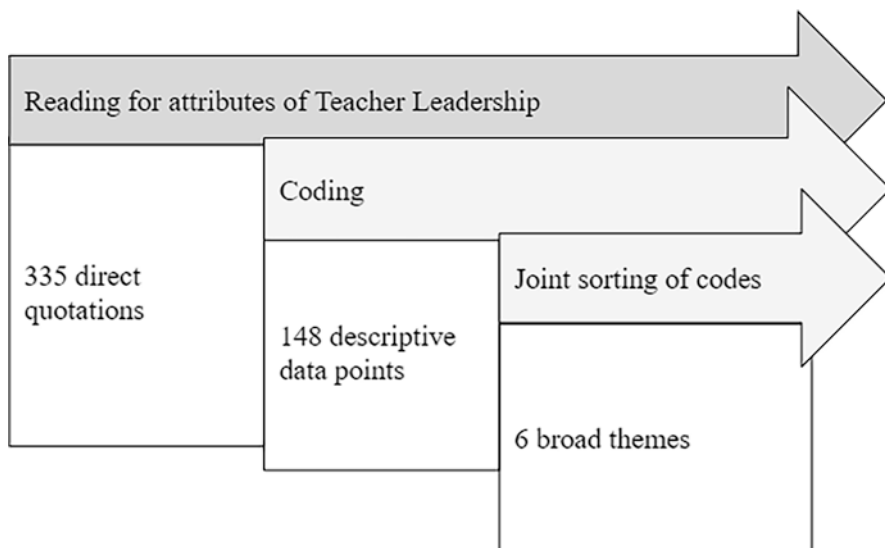


Fig. 7.2 Data coding process. (Saldana, 2011)

the following statement related to the competency *fosters effective relationships*: “A teacher establishes, promotes and sustains inclusive learning environments where diversity is embraced and every student is welcomed, cared for, respected and safe” (p. 6). While these examples are requirements for all teachers, teacher leaders are likely to engage with these challenging competencies in significant ways that help their colleagues to thrive.

Nineteen documents or web pages were reviewed (see appendix) and selected to profile the perspectives of some of the main educational partners in Alberta generally and, more specifically, in the Calgary region (Fig. 7.2).

Applying coding strategies suggested by Saldana (2011), the researchers selected 335 direct quotations that they grouped under the teacher leadership attributes. The 335 direct quotations were summarized as 148 descriptive data points. The researchers sorted the 148 data points into common groupings, arriving at six emergent themes. In turn, the themes were divided into italicized subthemes related to each attribute.

Findings

Six themes emerged from the researchers’ analysis of documents that expressed the views of key educational partners in relation to the attributes of teacher leadership (see Fig. 7.3). The themes offer a complex composite profile of teacher leadership expectations in the Alberta context.

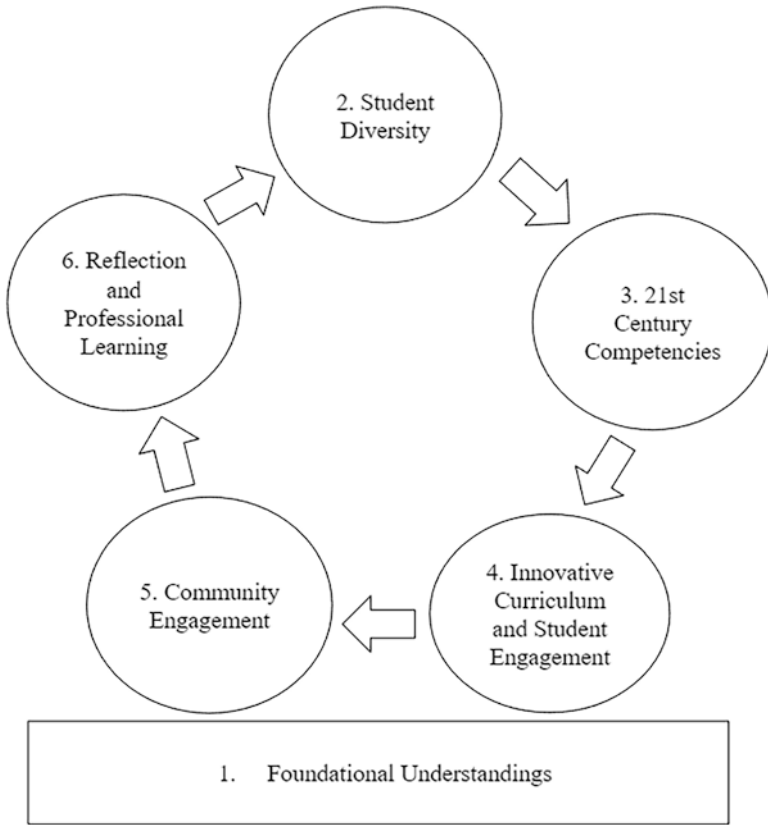


Fig. 7.3 Teacher leadership themes

1. Foundational Understandings

The *foundational understandings* theme was composed of five subthemes: professional, legal, skills, values, and knowledge. These subthemes represent the types of foundational understandings inherent in provincial educational organizations’ stated views necessary for all teachers with an implicit stronger emphasis for teacher leaders.

The first subtheme of foundational understandings was the *professional* component of teacher leadership that included, for example, respecting the legitimate authority structure in a school community: “The teacher criticizes the professional competence or professional reputation of another teacher only in confidence to proper officials and after the other teacher has been informed of the criticism, subject only to section 24 of the Teaching Profession Act” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2019a, para 14). Further the Code of Professional Conduct reminds teachers that they “may not accept pay for tutoring a pupil in any subjects in which the teacher is responsible for giving classroom instruction to that pupil” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2019a, para 7).

The *legal* subtheme of teacher leadership was central to the foundational theme. Examples of legal responsibilities for teacher leaders are the expectations that “The teacher may not divulge information about a pupil received in confidence or in the course of professional duties except as required by law or where, in the judgment of the teacher, to do so is in the best interest of the pupil” (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2019a, para 6). Furthermore, teachers will abide by “standards of conduct of a caring, knowledgeable and reasonable adult entrusted with the custody and care of student” (Alberta Education, 2018b, p. 7).

There also is a *skills* subtheme apparent in educational organizations’ public documents. For instance, teacher education students are required to demonstrate success within higher education—significant because of the university-based venue for Bachelor of Education programs in Alberta. For example, teacher candidates at the University of Calgary (2020c, d) learn to integrate STEM concepts and design-based thinking in curricular planning and teacher candidates at Mount Royal University (2020a) engage in a school-based professional inquiry in their final capstone course.

A *values* subtheme also was evident. That is, an understanding emerged that teacher leaders should communicate high expectations for all students (Alberta Government, 2020) while concurrently believing that “all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching and appropriate resources” (Alberta Learning, 2004, p. 1). Furthermore, teacher leaders “collaborate with the school community to create and implement a shared vision for student success, engagement, learning and well-being” (Alberta Education, 2018a, p. 5).

Finally, there is a strong expectation that teacher leaders will have a rich grounding in their teachable subjects and in pedagogy (Mount Royal University, 2020a; University of Calgary, 2020d). Examples of other areas that fall within the *knowledge* subtheme are “brain development training to help staff understand how brain development influences learning and to inform best practices” (Calgary Catholic School District, 2019, p. 15) and knowledge related to First Nations, Metis, and Inuit communities (Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2019b).

2. Student Diversity

Teachers in Alberta are expected to demonstrate the capacity to function effectively with a high level of *student diversity* (Alberta Education, 2019a). Teacher leaders are those who manifest a skill and knowledge set that inspires and influences their colleagues in unusually productive ways. For instance, teacher leaders will help to “determine the most enabling placement in a manner consistent with provincial special education policies, in consultation with parents, and based on current assessment data” (Alberta Learning, 2004, p. 10) for students with special needs.

Teacher preparation programs equip teacher leaders to address the range of special student needs (Mount Royal University, 2020a) and to effectively communicate with students’ parents to organize personalized support (Alberta Education, 2019b).

One subtheme of the student diversity theme is student *mental health and wellness*. This component of teacher leadership is featured in teacher education programming through a required course at the University of Calgary (2020a, b) called

Comprehensive School Health and Wellness. The understanding that the mental health and wellness of students is a priority is shared at the ministry level (Alberta Government, 2018) in documents such as *Creating Welcoming, Caring, Respectful & Safe Learning Environments* and in the strategies of school districts such as the Calgary Catholic School District (2019, p. 14), which details its *Student Wellness: Mental Health and Resiliency Strategy*.

Foundational knowledge of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit is a particular focus in the Alberta education system. This subtheme of student diversity is reflected in the policy documents and goals statements disseminated by school districts (e.g., Foothills School Division, 2019) and the teachers' union (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2019b). Most teacher preparation programs in the province have a mandatory course to prepare new teachers to meet the competency identified in the Teaching Quality Standard: "A teacher develops and applies foundational knowledge about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit for the benefit of all students" (Alberta Education, 2018b, p. 6).

There is strong evidence of a common focus on *cultural diversity* in the public documentation of provincial education organizations. For instance, it is prominent in the professional standard that teachers must meet (Alberta Education, 2018b) such as "honouring cultural diversity and promoting intercultural understanding" (p. 4) and "incorporating students' personal and cultural strengths into teaching and learning" (p. 6).

Even the Programs of Study (Alberta Education, 2019b), the curriculum framework that all Alberta schools must follow, requires teachers to facilitate intercultural awareness among their students. For example, the English Language Arts Program of Studies (Alberta Learning, 2000) lists a general outcome: "respect others and strengthen community" with specific outcomes including "appreciate diversity ... relate texts to culture ... use language to show respect" (p. 86).

Alberta Education (2016) articulates school protocols relating to *sexual and gender diversity* in *Guidelines for best practices: Creating learning environments that respect diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expression*. This document details the responsibility of schools to respect "students and staff who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirit, queer, questioning, and/or gender-diverse" (p. 2). Best practices include respecting an individual's right to self-identification, respecting privacy and confidentiality, minimizing gender-segregated activities, providing safe access to washroom facilities, ensuring dress codes respect gender identity and expressions, and fostering healthy school relationships to nurture belonging.

An important aspect of student diversity, as it is represented in the public documents of education organizations in Alberta, is educator access to relevant teacher development opportunities so they can become knowledgeable about ways to support students using individual program plans and appropriate classroom placements. Therefore, there are cross-organizational calls for educator access to relevant professional development and coaching (Alberta Government, 2018; Alberta Teachers Association, 2018b; Foothills School Division, 2019). The Alberta Regional

Consortia (2017) provide this type of professional development through numerous workshops and webinars.

3. Twenty-First-Century Competencies

The public documents examined in this study emphasized three critical areas for teachers to address as *twenty-first-century competencies*.

First, there is a strong need for teachers and especially teacher leaders who can facilitate *engaged citizenship*. The Program of Studies (Alberta Education, 2019b), which all Alberta teachers must follow, states clearly that the purposes of schooling include the exploration of political and social issues that will lead to the development of responsible, contributing citizens who are life-long learners. For example, “Social studies provides opportunities for students to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that will enable them to become engaged, active, informed and responsible citizens” (Alberta Education, 2020).

Other goals statements in the documents that were reviewed implied that facilitating an engaged citizenry depends upon the development of specific *student competencies*. For instance, Alberta Education (2019c) stated that competencies are “combinations of attitudes, skills and knowledge that students develop and apply for successful learning, living and working” (para 1) including

- Critical thinking.
- Problem solving.
- Managing information.
- Creativity and innovation.
- Communication.
- Collaboration.
- Cultural and global citizenship.
- Personal growth and well-being.

In addition, a ministerial order (Government of Alberta, 2013) describes the goal to enable students to “be engaged thinkers and ethical citizens with an entrepreneurial spirit” (p. 2).

The Programs of Study (Alberta Education, 2019b) also calls on teachers to facilitate student perseverance and risk taking in the context of an *uncertain future*. This is a skill set that Alberta teacher education programs also seek to develop in aspiring teachers. For example, the University of Calgary (2020a, b) describes the need for teachers who can thrive in changing global, technological, and sociopolitical contexts. The Rocky View School District aspires to “engage students as co-designers of their learning, empowering them to follow their passions and challenging them to new heights, ... mov(ing) beyond classroom walls to the natural world, building sites, farms, engineering firms, hospitals, zoos, museums, and theatres” (para. 14–15). The mission of Foothills School Division (2019, para 1) is: “Each learner entrusted to our care has unique gifts and abilities. It is our mission to find out what these are ... Explore them ... Develop them ... Celebrate them!”

4. Innovative Curriculum and Student Engagement

According to the Alberta educational stakeholders whose public documents were reviewed, teacher leadership has strong curriculum and student engagement components. While all teachers are expected to aspire to plan for and engage students, teacher leaders engage in collaboration to invite innovative curriculum and student engagement beyond their own classrooms. For example, Mount Royal University (2020b, para 5) identifies as a program value “innovative teaching practices that push beyond the ordinary, including digital, arts-based, and experiential learning.”

The Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018b) calls on teachers to “build student capacity for collaboration” and to design learning experiences that are “varied, engaging, and relevant to students” (p. 5). The Programs of Study (Alberta Education, 2019b) ask teachers to attend to children’s curiosity and to facilitate student teamwork. Collectively, these documents suggest that teacher leaders have an enhanced capacity to facilitate *innovation and engagement*.

Teachers who develop and lead inventive pedagogies will employ a range of *non-traditional instructional strategies*. They will use digital technology appropriately and stay abreast of emerging technologies with the potential to enhance knowledge and skill development (Alberta Education, 2018b). Innovative teachers also will expand students’ understanding of literacy beyond text to include viewing and representing to “understand the ways in which images and language may be used to convey ideas, values and beliefs” (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 3).

A key element of innovation and student engagement is teachers’ responsibility for monitoring student progress frequently and accurately to “engage students to reflect on their learning” (Alberta Assessment Consortium, 2017). That includes involving students and parents in assessment strategies and communicating effectively with relevant members of the school community (Alberta Education, 2004). Indeed, teacher education programs in Alberta emphasize the importance of teachers being accountable for *assessing student learning* and reporting to parents and other stakeholders. Both Mount Royal University (2020a) and the University of Calgary (2020a, b) include a core course in assessment in their Bachelor of Education programs. Ongoing support for teachers in the area of student assessment is available through the Alberta Assessment Consortium (2019), a not-for-profit society that advocates for sound classroom assessment, contributes to assessment literacy in the Alberta educational community, develops assessment materials related to the Alberta curriculum, and provides professional development for educators.

5. Community Engagement

A central element in teacher leaders’ influence is engagement with community members and organizations in a manner that goes far beyond the classroom. The influence of teacher leaders is evident in their collaboration with *community agencies*. For example, teacher education students at Mount Royal University (2020a) participate in community outreach initiatives with Calgary Reads (2019), an organization dedicated to fostering children’s love of reading by partnering with schools, businesses, and community service providers. The teacher education students at

Mount Royal University also collaborate with the Tim Horton Children's Ranch (2019) to support children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances in the development of leadership, resilience, and responsibility.

School districts in the Calgary area also collaborate with a number of community agencies. The Foothills School Division (2019) and Calgary Catholic School District (2017a, b) involve school students of various ages in extensive partnerships with community organizations, as do Rocky View Schools (2019). For example, the Rocky View Schools (2020) *Building Futures* program connects high school students with homebuilders. Clearly, successful community engagement depends upon robust inter-agency *relationships* that are predicated on collaboration among parents, teachers, administrators, and community members.

6. Reflection and Professional Learning

The significance of *personal reflection* for teachers and, even more so, for teacher leaders is evident in several stakeholder documents. The Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018b) emphasizes teachers' responsibility to engage in career-long learning and critical reflection. The Alberta Teachers' Association Code of Professional Conduct (2019a) calls on teachers to hold themselves and their schools to a high professional standard. Students in the teacher education program at Mount Royal University (2020a) are required to take part in reflective seminars during their school practica, where they are asked to participate in ethical and reflective dialogue (an explicit program value) and to engage in intentional goal-setting activities.

An impetus for personal reflection can be the constructive *feedback and evaluation* that teachers receive as part of performance reviews. "Teachers have the right to fair and reasonable evaluation of professional performance and have the responsibility to give sincere consideration to any suggestions for improvement" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2018b). Furthermore, all teachers are required to use the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education (2018b) as the basis for their annual professional growth plan (Alberta Teachers Association, 2020).

It was evident in the documents reviewed for this study that *ongoing professional development* is a fundamental responsibility of teachers generally and teacher leaders especially. The Leadership Quality Standard (Alberta Education (2018a) offered the view that teacher leaders should be supported by formal leaders as they engage in improving leadership, teaching, and learning. The Alberta Teachers' Association's Annual Report (2018a) described a wide range of professional development opportunities that teachers are encouraged to access. The opportunities included Alberta Teachers' Association library materials, international exchange programs, teachers' conventions (required of all teachers), and subject area specialist councils. School districts such as Rocky View Schools (2019) support teacher development through school and district communities of practice that involve face-to-face meetings and online sharing and reflection. Alberta Regional Consortia (2017) offer professional development across the province in face-to-face, online, and blended formats, which means teachers in urban, rural, and remote communities all have access to high-quality and current professional learning. Similarly, the University of Calgary (2020e) offers a host of professional undergraduate and graduate programs in

face-to-face and online formats so that ongoing professional development is eminently accessible to teaching professionals.

Discussion

The document analysis findings reflect the views of teacher leadership that are explicitly and implicitly communicated in the public documents of key educational partners in Alberta. When the profile of teacher leadership portrayed in official documents was examined carefully, several issues emerged that might challenge teacher leaders to consistently demonstrate the attributes of teacher leadership.

Professional Tensions

Teacher leaders play an important role in upholding professional expectations and responsibilities. However, parents may be skeptical of educational initiatives such as inquiry-based learning or be reluctant to examine their personal views regarding gender diversity; teacher leaders must balance those community expectations with their professional judgments. In addition, teacher leaders may feel the need to express strong views during staff decision-making discussions and perhaps feel conflicted when they need to respect the decisions of principals and other administrators or counter the dominant views held by other teachers.

Other tensions may emerge in relation to influencing colleagues whose competence may compromise student learning, resulting in strained relations with both teachers and administrators or even damage to the teacher leader's acceptance and credibility within the school. Similarly, teacher leaders may experience uncertainty and conflict in relation to their professional role and their personal role as parents if their own children encounter questionable teaching at school. In those circumstances, teacher leaders may grapple with conflicts related to their personal views, confidentiality, and professional codes of conduct.

Curricular Tensions

The expectation that teacher leaders will help their colleagues to facilitate innovative approaches to curriculum that optimize student engagement and learning requires them to navigate several challenges. For instance, teacher leaders who seek to implement a pedagogy that builds on student curiosity may perceive themselves to be impeded by the mandated provincial program of studies. At other times, teacher leaders' possible focus on student collaboration and teamwork may conflict

with the learning and achievement goals held by individual students and their parents.

Colleagues with whom teacher leaders wish to collaborate may not have the skills needed to implement an innovative pedagogy nor the motivation to develop the necessary skills. Large class sizes and complex learners may demand more teacher time than is available to meet learner needs successfully. Digital tools that teacher leaders believe are necessary for preparing students for the twenty-first century may not be sufficiently accessible. A focus on interdisciplinary learning has many benefits, especially fostering the ability to see interconnections among topics, but can limit the acquisition of key disciplinary concepts.

A curricular emphasis on twenty-first century competencies may focus on resilience in the face of rapid ambiguity and social change, resilience that perhaps teachers, parents, and community members may not have themselves. Cultivating citizenship skills in this context may also be complicated by alienation among community members and political leaders who themselves struggle with feeling that their concerns and lifestyles are threatened by changing social and political forces.

Community Tensions

The reality of schools in Alberta, particularly those in urban centers, is one of significant cultural diversity. As a result, teacher leaders may find it difficult to maintain a focus on the collective welfare of learners and on the implementation of the mandated curriculum that can be perceived to conflict with student and parent expectations, e.g., the role of women in society, which is more conservative in some traditional societies. Learners with special needs of varying complexity may overwhelm the capacity of teacher leaders and their colleagues in terms of demands on their time and expertise.

Classrooms may be composed of large proportions of students with several linguistic backgrounds, all working to gain proficiency in verbal and written English or French, resulting in teachers with little or no time and energy to attend to issues affecting the broader school community. Teacher leaders may struggle with their own or colleagues' access to the cultural knowledge that will enable them to meet the Teaching Quality Standard that requires them to develop and apply basic knowledge about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit cultures in their schools.

Teacher leaders who strive to establish and maintain safe and respectful learning environments will be impacted by the variation in student wellness manifested in Alberta schools. Some students who are struggling with a range of mental health and trauma issues may exhibit behaviors that create discomfort and discord among students and their families. As a result, teacher leaders need to find ways to help community members who may not understand mental health challenges or may fear for the welfare of their own children if they are alarmed by classmates' threatening or violent conduct. Alternatively, student wellness needs are not always visible, and teachers may overlook students who desperately require care. Furthermore, children

with special needs often need significant adult attention and specialized learning materials that may simply not be available.

Teacher leaders are often proactive in seeking collaborations that enrich classroom experiences. Certainly, collaborating with community organizations may provide enhanced possibilities for student learning and social engagement, but there is always the threat that educational decisions may be overshadowed by the interests of the larger community or corporate interests.

Political Tensions

Within the findings of the document analyses is a host of implicit political tensions. For instance, concurrent with calls for educators to prepare students for twenty-first century living is the recognition that rapid change within Alberta—social, political, economic, technological, and environmental—has led to levels of uncertainty and ambiguity that challenge teacher leaders’ intentions to plan carefully and nurture stability. Too often, current public discourse related to education is replete with politicized rhetoric related to issues such as school funding and accountability.

Issues such as school choice—characterized in Alberta by a range of schooling formats such as public, private, Catholic, charter, and home—may cause teacher leaders to engage in defense of their preferred educational infrastructures and to attack perceived competitors. Ongoing power struggles between provincial policy-makers and the teachers’ union in areas such as salaries, revisions to the Alberta Program of Studies, disciplinary actions in instances of teachers’ unprofessional conduct, and standardized assessment programs highlight the critical need for teacher leaders with enough social and political acumen to collaborate effectively with local and provincial educational partners.

The advocacy dimension of teacher leadership comes with the possibility of collaboration but also of conflict between teacher leaders and other decision-makers in school communities. That is, advocating for the welfare of students has a high likelihood of success when educational partners agree. However, tensions can emerge when teacher leaders advocate for students who are perceived to compete for actions and resources that support other student needs thought to be equally or more important.

Personal Tensions

An obligation to serve students, schools, and the profession is stated explicitly and implicitly in the documents reviewed for this study. Professionalism is key to meeting the formal and informal expectations of teachers in Alberta. However, there are tensions that teacher leaders must personally consider.

For example, maintaining the highest priority on students and their learning is at the forefront of the obligations of all teachers. While teacher leaders should aim to stay professionally current, there are limits to what is feasible within the time constraints of a classroom teacher's daily work. As well, teachers have a professional duty to reserve time to reflect on their work and to engage in lifelong learning. Additionally, teacher leaders should take time to nurture their career trajectories. The regular work of classroom teachers is intensive in terms of the time it requires to be successful.

Further demands are placed on teacher leaders' time because of their participation in community affairs. Their time is also required by family and personal commitments. Also, they would be foolhardy not to attend to their personal health and wellness by practicing adequate levels of self-care. Teacher leaders must find a way to handle the time and energy demands that exceed the professional service of most classroom teachers.

Professional Learning Tensions

Finally, teacher leaders are expected to be champions for career-long learning, deep reflection, and seeking feedback to improve their practice. However, there is an ongoing debate about the value of mandated professional development over self-directed goal setting and learning. Limited time, access, pressure to obtain credentials, and struggling to collaborate with resistant colleagues are all factors that can constrain the professional development choices that teacher leaders can make.

Achieving a Balance

The descriptions of teacher leadership shared in this report are idealized statements that vary according to the organizations that produced them and all have significant inherent inhibitors. For example, the teachers' union prioritized advocacy and ethical responsibilities, while school authorities emphasized innovative curricula. Provincial government documents touched most theme areas but especially those related to curriculum and teacher support and to policies for special populations of learners. Each of the organizations has a set of understandable priorities related to its role within the Alberta education system and, almost certainly, a corresponding set of implicit but equally important priorities that were not the focus of this study.

What was obvious, however, was the low likelihood of any teacher leader demonstrating competence in all the theme areas. Thus, teacher leaders must necessarily seek a sustainable balance in their commitment to the multiple educational priorities that compete for their attention.

Table 7.2 portrays teacher leader considerations in relation to each of the six themes found in the documents that were analyzed for this study. The list is a summary of how teacher leaders may choose to navigate the tensions associated with their roles.

Table 7.2 Teacher leader considerations

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Foundational dimensions | Serving as an influencer, not an authority |
| | Manifesting enhanced social and political acumen |
| | Communicating skillfully |
| | Being a reliable confidante |
| Innovative curriculum & student engagement | Planning teaching and learning that is provocative |
| | Building collaborative teams |
| | Creating nurturing organizational cultures |
| | Breaking boundaries |
| Cultural diversity and student learning needs | Maintaining an influential teaching presence |
| | Respecting human dignity |
| | Finding knowledgeable cultural guides |
| Twenty-first-century competencies | Navigating change |
| | Focusing on competencies while content changes |
| | Embracing ambiguity |
| Community engagement | Prioritizing learning |
| | Fostering critical thought |
| | Balancing formal and informal learning |
| | Expecting turbulence |
| Reflection and professional learning | Anticipating career stage variation |
| | Regulating the flow of professional development |
| | Working mainly with adopters, not resisters |
| | Accessing atypical professional learning opportunities |

Composite Teacher Leader Profile

The considerations in Table 7.2 were used to derive (infer) a composite profile of teachers with the capacity to *serve*, *influence*, and *thrive* as teacher leaders. The proposed profile is intended to respect the intent of the idealized descriptions contained in organizational documents while applying a pragmatic lens intended to facilitate a realistic understanding of the role of teacher leaders.

Service

A commitment to principled service to the school communities is a guiding force for teacher leaders. They attend first to their primary roles as teachers who strive to nurture learning for all students. They prioritize learning for their students, their colleagues, and themselves. They expect career-stage variation in their capacity to serve, and they trust the process of ongoing professional growth during the ebb and flow of service that occurs throughout their professional and personal lives. Rather than engage in unsustainable overload at certain points in their careers, they can

achieve a sustainable, longitudinal balance of school, community, and personal commitments. They judge their professional contributions by the magnitude of career-long influence rather than episodic metrics.

Influence

Teacher leaders understand the value and impact of informal influence versus formal leadership. They embrace the role of an influencer over that of an authority and accept the ambiguity related to that positioning. As an influencer, teacher leaders can function as reliable confidantes who sustain a caring professional culture. They foster critical thought and serve as collaborative team builders, both of which are critical contributions to professional learning communities. Furthermore, teacher leaders are lifelong learners who appreciate the importance of self-regulating the flow of professional development. Teacher leaders are enthusiastic in their engagement with traditional professional learning offered by schools, universities, and professional organizations. However, they also demonstrate astuteness in their ability to perceive, take advantage of, and plan atypical professional learning opportunities that are life- and career-changing.

Leadership

Teacher leaders are typically portrayed in the research literature primarily as informal leaders rather than individuals who occupy formal leadership positions in schools. However, the documents reviewed for this study contained multiple descriptions of leadership that could be and often are used in both the educational leadership and the teacher leadership literature. The interpretation offered here is that the descriptions of leadership shared in the literature related to teacher leadership and to educational leadership are significantly different in tone and nuance. For example, both teacher leaders and formal leaders are described as skilled communicators but even a cursory interrogation of that term suggests that communication by a formal leader is infused with the authority of title and position, while communication by informal teacher leaders relies more on the impact of influence and service.

That is not to say that communication with and by formal leaders is not impacted by influence, service, and institutional history. The point is that communication by informal and formal leaders is qualitatively different and that individuals in both roles likely are acutely aware of that difference. That said, teacher leaders should expect, like all leaders, to engage with some degree of the organizational turbulence elicited by change of almost any type.

Informal Power

There are other attributes that teacher leaders may manifest differently from formal leaders. For instance, teacher leaders rely heavily upon social and political acumen to achieve influence. They are adroit at navigating change without the type of (and perhaps the burden of) power associated with formal leadership. They work almost exclusively with willing participants during curricular and organizational change. Possibly because of their informal leadership roles, teacher leaders can serve as boundary breakers who can navigate relatively smoothly within and across school and community groups. They are possibly more free than formal leaders to push the boundaries of curriculum and pedagogy because they are less constrained by perhaps more stringent community expectations for principals. Notably, teacher leaders have the potential to be perceived as more respectful of human dignity than formal leaders due to not being associated with the wielding of the formal power of position that may be understood to be challenging or intimidating.

Conclusion

This report is intended to highlight what stakeholder organizations say they think teacher leadership should be. It is a report from the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* that indicates how teacher leadership is conceptualized in formal organizational statements. It also identifies a set of tensions that teacher leaders in Alberta are likely to encounter. Finally, it offers a general profile of teacher leaders who wish to function effectively and sustainably in Alberta.

Future reports will add depth and breadth based on additional data that are being gathered in a sequence of interviews, questionnaires, case studies, and oral histories. The intent is to expand the understanding of teacher leadership and to offer a thick, rich description of the lived experience of teacher leaders.

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Chapter 8

Teacher Leadership in South Africa: The Power of Influence in Restoring Social Justice



C. P. van der Vyver , M. P. Fuller , and J. B. Khumalo 

Abstract This chapter focusses on teacher leadership as a power of influence in post-apartheid South Africa. Since the abolishment of the apartheid regime and the establishment of a democratic society in South Africa, many changes have occurred, specifically in the education system. These changes did not always result in improvement and success. Spaul (South Africa’s education crisis: the quality of education in South Africa 1994–2011. Centre for Development & Enterprise. Retrieved on March 14, 2019, from <https://www.section27.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Spaul-2013-CDE-report-South-Africas-Education-Crisis.pdf>, 2013) indicated that the country “has the worst education system of all middle-income countries that participate in cross-national assessments of educational achievement” (p. 3). Leadership, specifically teacher leadership, is seen as a possible key contributor to effective education and the transformation of South African schools (Grant C, *Educ Manag Adm Leadersh* 47:37–55, 2019). It is required that teachers assume certain leadership roles and responsibilities to ensure sustainable school improvement through continued professional teacher development (CPTD) (Naidoo P, *S Afr J Educ* 39:1–14, 2019). This study explored the conceptualization and power of influence regarding teacher leadership in South Africa and was guided by the following research question: What is the meaning of teacher leadership in South Africa implied in official documentation and what power of influence do teacher leaders have in restoring social justice? Underpinned by the interpretive paradigm, the research

This report is based on research done as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. For more information, see the study website: www.mru.ca/istl.

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approach was qualitative and involved a document analysis of selected official documents, including legislation, policy documentation, reports, guidelines, and frameworks. The data obtained from the documents were analyzed by means of content analysis. First, a priori coding was applied during the analysis, using the attributes identified by Webber (A rationale and proposed design for researching teacher leadership. Paper presented to the International Research Conference, hosted by the Faculty of Education at Guangxi Normal University in Guilin, China, May 26–27, 2018) and second, open coding was used to identify emerging themes.

The findings revealed the different influence spheres of teacher leadership in South Africa, as well as the focus on influencing the restoration of social justice. Through teacher leadership and the influence of teacher leaders, the injustices of the past should be addressed from a social justice perspective. Findings further indicated the influential characteristics of teacher leaders as well as how they exercise influence. In South Africa, the focus is currently on the training of school leaders, through formal qualifications as well as professional development opportunities. The findings of the research necessitate the development of teacher leaders through initial preservice training as well as in-service professional development to ensure school improvement and restore social justice.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Influence · Social justice · Professional development

Introduction

The legacy of South Africa's apartheid policy has left its marks on the educational landscape, leaving the education system not yet fully recovered from its effects (Macha & Kadakia, 2017). Since the abolishment of the apartheid regime and the establishment of a democratic society in South Africa, many changes have occurred, specifically in the education system. However, these changes did not always result in improvement and success. Spaul (2013) indicated that the country "has the worst education system of all middle-income countries that participate in cross-national assessments of educational achievement" (p. 3). According to Macha and Kadakia (2017), the education system is still failing the students and the country. The National Development Plan [NDP] (Republic of South Africa, 2012) highlighted the need to improve the quality of basic education in South African schools. Leadership may provide the key to school improvement in South Africa (Bush & Gover, 2016). More specifically, Grant (2019) saw teacher leadership as a key contributor to the transformation of South African schools leading to effective education. The transformation in the South African education system includes aspects such as functionality, social justice, managing diversity, and providing equal learning opportunities for all. Cosenza (2015) claimed that the role of teacher leadership

in school improvement, teacher retention, and learner achievement was increasingly recognized. It is required that teachers assume certain leadership roles and responsibilities and for them to effectively apply the roles and responsibilities for which they need CPTD (Naidoo, 2019). School leadership in South Africa in many instances still follows a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure as well as autocratic leadership styles that dominate and inhibit the realization and enactment of distributed leadership, including teacher leadership (Bush, 2007; Bush & Glover, 2016; Grant, 2006; Makoelle & Makhalemele, 2020). Despite the changes in policy to move toward more participatory and distributed leadership practice, these practices do not seem to be enacted (Grant, 2019).

Hallinger (2018b) identified a general gap in knowledge regarding leadership in schools in developing nations in the world, which was also acknowledged by Grant (2019), indicating a lack of research and literature on teacher leadership in Africa. Grant (2019) further acknowledged that the concept of teacher leadership is new in South Africa. Many teachers are unaware of the concept or understand it as leadership restricted to the classroom. The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to current teacher leadership literature in South Africa and Africa. In this chapter, we report a study that explored the conceptualization and power of influence regarding teacher leadership in South Africa through the analysis of official documentation, guided by the following research question: What is the meaning of teacher leadership in South Africa and what power of influence do teacher leaders have in restoring social justice? To answer the research question, the study sought to conceptualize teacher leadership by identifying the dimensions and influence spheres thereof and explore how enacting teacher leadership may contribute to social justice.

Cultural Context of the Study

Various authors have claimed that culture and context influence principal leadership as well as teacher leadership in the school (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012; Grant, 2010; Hallinger, 2018a). Similarly, we want to argue that the specific cultural context in a country influences the manifestation and conceptualization of teacher leadership. Hallinger (2018a) referred to the influence of different contexts, including the “natural culture context, economic context and political context” (p. 11), which goes much wider than the local context of the school. South Africa’s past, with the legacy of apartheid and the influence thereof on the education system, is well known (Spaull, 2013). Recently, there has been considerable interest in the theme of teacher leadership (TL), which is necessitated by the desire to conceptualize the concept in the South African context. The contextualization of school leadership during the pre-1994 or apartheid era was done by sketching a historical background of the nature of school leadership over the years. A background to school leadership practices is necessary to locate TL in leadership approaches, which were prevalent and are still practiced in several schools today.

In the past, the culture of school leadership and TL was “ineffective leadership and management practices in many of our public schools, especially those in historically black areas” (Moloi & Bush, 2006, p. 14). One of the goals of education transformation since 1994 is to “provide a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice” (DOE, 2001a, b, p. 4). Accordingly, the value of social justice could manifest in affording teachers’ opportunities to practice TL, thereby influencing the direction that the school seeks to take and eradicating any disparities and inequalities from the past.

The history of South Africa prior to 1994 was “one profoundly shaped by colonialism and apartheid in which government legislation of the times perpetuated a society of inequality based on race, class and gender” (Grant, 2010, p. 3). This inequality was exacerbated by the fact that government policies promoted centralized and authoritarian control of education, which was firmly located within the white education departments (Christie, 1993). The kind of leadership and management during that era was based on the control model of management (Chisholm et al., 1999), which centralized school leadership and management around the principal. In such schools, teachers were not involved in school leadership, especially in black schools.

During the apartheid era, the education system and its procedures were “discriminatory, non-participatory and managed neither efficiently nor effectively” (Grant, 2010, p. 26). Principals were expected to become more managers than leaders because of what Grant (2010) described as “the desire to control South African schools” (p. 26) to ensure that they operated effectively. As a result of this excessive focus on management, the education system has bequeathed a culture of schools that focus on management rather than on leadership (Davidoff & Lazarus, 2002). In such a school culture, the enactment of teacher leadership was inconceivable. The “breakdown of both the leadership and the management functions in schools contributed to their dysfunctionality” (Grant, 2010, p. 26). This problem of dysfunctional schools was aggravated by the assumption that school leadership was synonymous with the principalship, and that nobody else could exert influence on staff to perform better.

According to Naiker et al. (2016), “the South African public schooling system is complex and has undergone seismic shifts in the post-apartheid period owing to changes in legislation that regulate schooling” (p. 1). After the advent of democracy in 1994, a Task Team investigated the professional development of school managers (principals) and reported resistance to change in the education system, which was characterized by inequity in the provision, fragmentation, and deterioration of a culture of learning and teaching (Department of Education (DOE), 1996). The South African Schools Act (1996), for instance, advanced the move from centralized decision-making to a school-based system of management and leadership, which involves all stakeholders, including principals, educators, parents, and learners.

The range of policies and official documents developed after 1994 created the opportunity for TL to develop in schools, but unfortunately is not described clearly. One example is found in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Ministry of

Education (MOE), 2000), which required the teacher to take on seven roles, of which one is the role of leader, manager, and administrator. Despite empowering policies and documents stating the importance of leadership, there seems to be a lack of adjustments to current leadership practices that would lead to improved academic performance. Although school leadership, including TL, is indicated as an essential element for successful and effective schools (Driescher, 2016), school leadership is still based on bureaucracy and a chain of command. Unfortunately, the influential position of classroom educators as teacher leaders is not completely acknowledged in the South African education system and mostly limited to the classroom (Driescher, 2016). The development of TL can lead to empowerment and quality education, erode the bureaucratic top-down approach, and aid in restoring injustices from the past.

TL seems to be an under-researched concept in the South African context (Grant, 2019; Grant et al., 2010). The lack of clarity about what TL is limits the effectiveness thereof and provides a strong rationale for exploring TL (Webber, 2018). In this vein, it is necessary to construct our meaning of TL by identifying its dimensions and spheres of influence to explore how an understanding and practice of TL can contribute to social justice in school leadership.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Social Justice Theory

Social justice guides the way people interact with each other and the emphasis is on removing any disparities and inequalities that are embedded in political, cultural, social, and economic areas that prevent equality, equity, non-discrimination, and fairness (Ali, 2015; Nieuwenhuis, 2010; Teise & Alexander, 2017). Ali (2015, p. 19) and Nieuwenhuis (2010, p. 269) agreed that the notion of social justice serves as an “ideal to which social structures should strive” and “a vision that must become a way of life that permeates all aspects of being human.” Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, the government has been trying to utilize education to redress any inequalities and disparities and transform schools that adhere to social justice principles.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) exclaimed to “[heal] the divisions of the past and to establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights” (p. 1). Even though the government has attempted for several years and has planned various initiatives to improve social injustice, it still prevails in South African schools (Chitsamatangax & Rembe, 2020; Nieuwenhuis, 2010; Teise & Alexander, 2017). Policies and legislation formed the backbone to reforming an education system in South Africa based on the principles of social justice. Nieuwenhuis (2010) noted that policies alone cannot correct all social injustices and policies tend to focus on fragmented social issues “while losing sight of the bigger picture” (p. 270).

Leaders need to continuously make conscious efforts to lead and teach according to democratic, ethical, and moral values that uphold social justice. Ali (2015) accentuated that “teacher leadership should be a focal point in any discussion regarding social justice in education” (p. 3). Therefore, teacher leaders are essential role players to ensure the improvement in education and that social justice is applied and embraced in all teaching and learning practices. Teachers are seen as agents of change (Ali, 2015; Teise & Alexander, 2017) but unfortunately, as Tikly (2011) indicated, “a raft of issues relate to teachers as a major cause of the education crisis” (p. 89). Literature accentuated that one of the approaches to improve social justice in education is through professional development programs and teacher training (Chitsamatangax & Rembe, 2020). However, Teise and Alexander (2017) pointed out that preservice education students may be unable “to understand, acknowledge and validate the intrinsic relationship that exists between culture and education” (p. 1). As such, they hamper efforts to realize social justice through education.

Teacher Leadership as Participative, Parallel, and Distributed Leadership

Ozdemir and Kilinc (2015) acknowledged that research has indicated that leadership approaches placing the responsibility of school leadership exclusively on the principal, do not meet the needs of the school community at large. Successful leadership is not about authority vested in command and control, but rather on influence. Harris and Spillane (2008) accentuated the fact that leadership within schools needs to be broadened to involve all staff members. The concept of distributed leadership has come to theorize leadership in a manner that could be viewed as parallel to shared, collaborative, or participative leadership (Harris, 2012).

Participative leadership and distributed leadership are both leadership theories that promote the decentralization of leadership and include teachers into decision-making structures within the school (Bush & Glover, 2016; Harris, 2003). When authority is divided among individuals, they are thought to have a collective perception on the goals of the organization. One of the assumptions of shared and distributed leadership is that leadership does not only reside in formal positions but can also be practiced outside of a formal position of authority. Flattening hierarchy and opening leadership distribution in schools establish leadership practices where people lead on the grounds of expertise and not position (Leithwood et al., 2020). The current trend in school leadership that accentuates distributed leadership was reinforced by Bush’s (2011) argument that “distributed leadership has become the normatively preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century” (p. 88). Similarly, distributed leadership can also be regarded as “one of the most influential ideas to emerge in the field of educational leadership” (Harris, 2012, p. 7) and is “particularly helpful in providing greater conceptual clarity around the terrain of teacher leadership” (Harris, 2003, p. 318). Bush and Glover (2016) further acknowledged

that “teacher leadership is a manifestation of distributed leadership” (p. 217). Distributed leadership could further be used as a “robust and appropriate theoretical tool for investigating school leadership practice in post-apartheid South Africa” (Grant, 2017, p. 473). Leithwood et al. (2009, p. 13) concurred that both formal and informal leadership approaches “co-exist and inter-relate and this interrelationship” consequently leads to improved school performance. Teachers taking up leadership roles and the practices of leadership exhibited by many teachers in South Africa inherently coincide with the model of distributed, parallel, and participative leadership (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012; Grant, 2008). Naiker and Mestry (2013) were of the opinion that South African leaders should adopt inclusive, participative approaches to leadership, moving away from hierarchical leadership structures. TL, for the purpose of this chapter, is acknowledged by the authors as a manifestation of shared, parallel, and distributed leadership practice within schools (cf. De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012; Grant, 2008).

Literature Review

Defining Teacher Leadership

To find a common understanding or definition for teacher leadership in literature seems an impossible task, and many authors agreed to a lack of clarity on what exactly teacher leadership entails (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012; Ozdemir & Kilinc, 2015). According to Bangs and MacBeath (2012), defining teacher leadership depends on the context in which the concept finds meaning. Some of the concept clarifications for teacher leadership included: classroom management and wider influence with regard to policy making and curriculum development (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012); behaviors within and outside the classroom, contributing towards a learning-orientated culture and development of best instructional practices (Ozdemir & Kilinc, 2015) and teachers who assume leadership positions in schools formally and informally to make change happen (Mulford, 2008). Although there are many definitions for teacher leadership, there are some commonalities in these definitions. Teacher leadership is about exercising influence (ASCD, 2015; Berg & Zoellick, 2018; Hallinger, 2018b; Makoelle & Makhalemele, 2020). Harris and Jones (2019) accentuated this notion by highlighting “the importance of teacher leadership as influence rather than a role or a formal responsibility” (p. 124).

This influence is exercised within the classroom, but also outside the boundaries of the classroom (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012; Cosenza, 2015; De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012; Grant, 2006, 2019; Ozdemir & Kilinc, 2015). The influence of teacher leaders brings about positive changes. Without committing to a specific definition for teacher leadership in this chapter, the authors want to argue that teacher leaders are teachers who exert influence in different ways and on different terrains or areas.

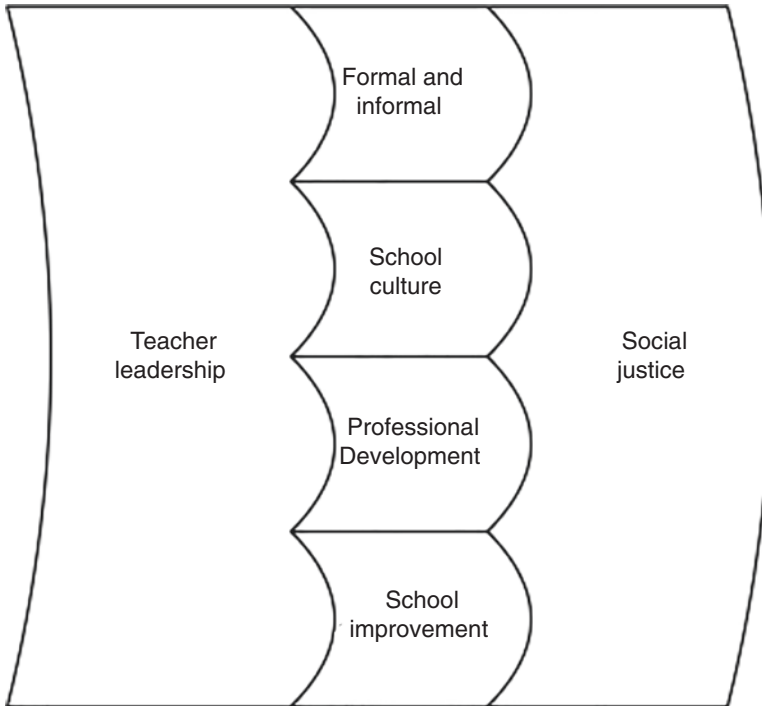


Fig. 8.1 Aspects associated with teacher leadership. (Adapted from Webber, 2018)

Aspects Associated with Teacher Leadership

There are four central aspects of teacher leadership (Fig. 8.1) that add to a better understanding of the concept, namely “formal and informal dimensions, influence of teacher leadership on school culture, teacher leadership as professional development, and teacher leadership as part of school improvement” (Webber, 2018, p. 4).

Formal and Informal Dimensions

Various authors recognized both the formal and informal dimensions of the practice of this leadership theory in schools (Berg & Zoellick, 2018; Grant, 2006). Berg and Zoellick (2018) acknowledged a lack of clarity around formal and informal teacher leadership but indicated it as a useful distinction. Ozdemir and Kilinc (2015) recognized that teacher leadership traditionally included formal leadership roles, but that lately new informal approaches to teacher leadership seem to be more effective in school improvement. The formal dimensions of teacher leadership include formal specialized leadership positions accompanied by payment for special services.

These formal specialized leadership positions for teachers can include management and pedagogical responsibilities (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Manuel (2012) mentioned that the importance of the presence of informal leadership in schools has largely been unrecognized, as it was merely seen as setting a good example. Cosenza (2015) pointed out that teacher leadership is not about formal roles but about skills that allow teachers to be effective inside and beyond the classroom. In the South African context, formal teacher leadership is exercised by people in formal positions of authority, such as principals, deputy principals, department heads, subject advisors, heads of grades, and even senior and master teachers, among others (Grant, 2006).

School Culture

The second aspect of TL is school culture. The influence of school culture on the achievement of learning outcomes is well documented (Webber, 2018). In the South African context, one of the prerequisites for TL is “a collaborative culture with participatory decision-making and vision sharing” (Grant, 2008, p. 523). The right conditions need to exist within the school for TL to thrive (ASCD, 2015). A culture of collegiality and shared decision-making can lead to the practice of TL in the school (Grant, 2008).

School culture is arguably determined by the type and quality of leadership that is practiced in a school. In a school where leadership is more authoritarian than distributive, there may be no space for teachers to assume leadership roles and influence the performance of their colleagues. A scrutiny of aspects of school culture that could promote or discourage teacher leadership is therefore necessary because it may impact “collective distributed leadership practices, school improvement, as well as educators’ participation, engagement, commitment and job satisfaction” (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012, p. 206). De Villiers and Pretorius (2012) posited that leadership practices in the modern educational era should be distributed and based on human interactions. In this vein, teacher leadership can flourish in an enabling school environment where teachers are supported and valued.

The practice of teacher leadership can be hamstrung by three clusters of factors, namely, “structural conditions in schools; support for teacher leadership; and occupational and professional norms/culture” (Doyle, 2000, p. 207). Regarding structural conditions in schools, School Management Teams (SMTs) have been identified as barriers to the practice of teacher leadership as distributive leadership is not applied in schools (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012). Gant and Singh’s (2009) study indicated that SMT members “controlled the culture of the school, giving teachers limited control and superficial involvement in decision-making” (p. 10). In such a rigid management and leadership structure there is limited space to exercise teacher leadership. Therefore, a school culture with rigid authority relations is not conducive for teacher leadership to flourish in schools.

Teachers may assume leadership in a school context where they are supported and valued by management. If the SMT does not have confidence in the ability of

teachers to lead, this can act as a barrier to teacher leadership. Frost and Durrant (2003) mentioned that TL is aimed at “empowering teachers, increasing professional status and nurturing local autonomy and control, and that empowerment and ownership positively impact on the commitment, efficacy and motivation of teachers” (p. 178). Teachers who are not empowered and involved in decision-making may feel disgruntled and demotivated and offer passive resistance to efforts to improve the school. Killion et al. (2016) concluded that “teachers develop leadership capacity when they are supported” (p. 3). It is therefore apparent that support for the growth of TL and opportunities for its practice in schools are needed from SMTs to foster TL in schools.

The occupational and professional norms and culture of a school can either facilitate or hinder teacher leadership if management underestimates the importance of involving teachers in decision-making. If afforded an opportunity to lead, “teacher leaders foster collaborative cultures that promote continuous improvement” (Killion et al., 2016, p. 3). There is evidence in the literature to show that a “healthy culture supports and advances teacher leadership, and teacher leadership contributes positively to a healthy culture” (Killion et al., 2016, p. 12). In addition to the creation of a healthy school culture amenable to TL, there must be structures in place to support TL. Killion et al. (2016) identified “operational conditions such as procedures, resources including time, and policies that align with the school system’s purpose, definition of, and goals for teacher leadership” (p. 13). The role of the principal and SMT in fostering norms, values, and a culture of TL is summed up by Manuel (2012), who noted that “the challenge facing many schools and even the DOE is how to move principals and SMT’s from their current position of top-down leadership to a position where they will embrace the value of teacher leadership development” (p. 23). In order to negotiate this challenge, Grant (2010) argued that “schools require leadership, not just from an individual person in the form of the principal, but from a range of people across the school, including teachers” (p. 3).

Professional Development (PD)

PD is used in education to keep teacher leaders updated on any aspect regarding educational change needed for school improvement. Professional development includes any formal and informal actions, programs, activities, approaches, measures, support, and strategies within and outside the schooling system toward teachers to improve aspects such as classroom practices, teaching, and learning, which make them experts in their subject content (Mkhwanazi, 2014). The aim of PD for TL should therefore be to increase “effectiveness and efficiency in the schools” (Ajani, 2020, p. 15822) and take place in preservice and in-service as well as induction programs (Moonsamy, 2010). PD activities need to accentuate the benefits of TL and develop teachers in areas such as mentoring, self-mentoring, and coaching that would lead to the successful enactment of TL (Moonsamy, 2010).

It is important that prospective teachers are familiarized with the various aspects regarding teacher leadership when they are enrolled for initial teacher qualifications and then be encouraged and developed from their first year of teaching. De Villiers (2010) agreed that teacher leaders need continuous PD support that is based on the concept of *lifelong learning*, where teachers get the opportunity to reflect, develop, collaborate, become experts, and gain confidence as teacher leaders. Moonsamy (2010) pointed out when PD enables TL to become experts in their area of specialization, teacher leadership extends beyond the classroom.

The need for teachers to develop professionally and improve their leadership capabilities in South Africa is accentuated in policy documents, including the Norms and Standards for Educators (MOE, 2000) as well as the Personnel Administrative Measures (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2016a, b). De Villiers (2010) exclaimed that PD must become a fundamental component to aid in the effective implementation of policies that emphasize TL in South Africa and for TL to become a leadership practice in schools. Current research on TL in South Africa emphasized that PD is essential to improve the enactment of TL (Makoelle & Makhalemele, 2020) Therefore the education department and districts need to prioritize PD and ensure that it is effective and appropriate to the needs of each teacher leader (Moonsamy, 2010). Although PD forms an essential component that would enhance the enactment of TL, in South Africa some PD initiatives seem to be a *one-size-fits-all* approach and aspects such as mentoring and coaching seldom take place in schools (Grant et al., 2010). Grant (2008) pointed out that in South Africa there is a “need for PD initiatives to consciously address leadership issues and post-initiative support processes when they are conceptualized” (p. 85) and accentuates that PD initiatives should be linked to TL, because “without this link, the learning from any development initiative is likely to remain at the level of the individual teacher and be restricted to the zone of the classroom” (p. 101).

School Improvement

Several studies have demonstrated that TL can be regarded as a “powerful tool” (Grant et al., 2010, p. 405) and “fundamental ingredient” (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 26) that can contribute to improved teaching and learning practices and lead to school improvement and the achievement of learning outcomes (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The contribution of TL to school improvement is reinforced by Killion et al. (2016), who held the view that “teacher leadership impacts student and peer performance” (p. 3). In the same vein, “it is essential for teachers to take up their leadership role and become agents of change in schools” (Grant, 2010, p. 5), to impact school improvement. The definition of TL implies that it is “inextricably linked to whole school development and improvement and enhanced student outcomes” (De Villiers, 2010, p. 52). York-Barr and Duke (2004) also emphasized that teachers influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to “improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student

learning and achievement” (p. 287). Another important dimension that enhances TL and consequently whole school development is the sharing of norms and values and collaboration among teachers. Muijs and Harris (2007) cited empirical evidence to prove that in more successful schools “teachers were given more time to collaborate with one another” (p. 113). Resultantly, learner performance, school change, improvement of learning outcomes and the creation of a generally positive school culture are benefits that may be derived from the successful practice of TL in schools.

Methodology

The research methodology followed a qualitative approach, underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm to deepen our understanding of the concept and influence of teacher leadership within the South African context. The specific research strategy pursued included a document analysis of official national documentation. In the sampling of the documentation, the following inclusion criteria were applied: national-level documents, official publications, publications after 1994, and relevance to education. Sampled documents included legislation, policy documentation, reports, guidelines, plans, and frameworks. After scrutinizing the available documentation, 17 documents were used for analysis.

It is important to take note that most legislation changed or was promulgated shortly after the establishment of the democratic dispensation in 1994. That provides an explanation for the large number of documents dating from 1996 to 2001. It is also important to note that the former Department of Education (DOE) in South Africa was divided into two departments in 2009, namely the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Higher Education.

The data obtained from the documents were analyzed by means of content analysis. First, a priori coding was applied during the analysis, using the attributes identified by Webber (2018). Second, open coding was used to identify emerging attributes and leadership areas related to TL. To enhance the trustworthiness of the research, two independent researchers coded the data separately. Thereafter, the analyses were compared, and the findings were confirmed based on what each researcher had discovered separately.

Findings

The chapter focused on the conceptualization and influence of TL in South African official documentation, using the social justice theory as a theoretical lens. Quotations from documents are included to support and illuminate the findings. The findings are structured according to main themes: (i) sphere of influence, (ii)

influencing the restoration of social justice, (iii) influential characteristics, and (iv) how teacher leaders exercise influence.

Teacher Leadership Spheres of Influence

As indicated in the review of literature, teacher leadership is about influencing. In the South African context, teacher leaders are viewed as important agents in the restoration of social justice. Three documents predominantly focused on areas in which TL exercises an influence. These areas or spheres of influence are depicted in Fig. 8.2.

Although teacher leadership was not directly indicated, phrases associated with leadership – be in charge, share responsibilities, manager, act as head, authority, leadership role, and organizing (DBE, 2016a; MOE, 1999, 2000) – were evident in these documents. The first sphere of influence was indicated as the classroom – “manage learning in the classroom and carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently” (MOE, 2000, p. 47) and “Constructing a classroom atmosphere which is democratic but disciplined, and which is sensitive to culture, race and gender differences as well as to disabilities” (p. 50). It is further the responsibility of the teacher leader “To establish a classroom environment which stimulates positive



Fig. 8.2 Teacher leadership spheres of influence

learning and actively engages learners in the learning process” (DBE, 2016a, p. 18). The second sphere of influence identified is within the broader school. The teacher has to “participate in school decision making structures” (MOE, 2000, p. 47) and “work with other practitioners in team-teaching and participative decision making” (MOE, 2000, p. 50), “take on a leadership role in respect of the subject, learning area or phase” (DBE, 2016a, p. 18), “foster administrative efficiency within the department” (p. 29), and be involved in extramural activities such as “sport, artistic and cultural activities” (MOE, 2000, p. 50). Third, it was evident that teachers are expected to “develop supportive relations with parents and other key persons and organizations based on a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues” (MOE, 2000, p. 51) and “understanding key community problems with particular emphasis on issues of poverty, health, environment and political democracy” (MOE, 2000, p. 85). It became clear from the documents that teachers were expected to fulfill leadership roles and have an influence as restorers of social justice in the classroom and beyond in the larger school and the community.

Influencing the Restoration of Social Justice

Seven documents accentuated aspects regarding a sensitivity toward the restoration of social justice (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; DOE, 1995, 2001a, b; MOE, 1999, 2000; National Education Policy Act, 1996). Emphasis was placed on adopting learning programs, activities, and strategies that show sensitivity toward gender, race, culture, geographic location, ethnicity, and language differences among learners; and on establishing a supportive, democratic, and empowering learning atmosphere by teachers. Teachers should be aware of discrepancies regarding communities, ethics, religion, and culture and be knowledgeable about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Teachers should further show a sensitivity toward current social and educational issues, such as child and women abuse, violence, poverty, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, and other infectious diseases, as well as environmental degradation. In a similar vein, the National Education Policy Act (1996) mentions the protection of the “fundamental rights of every person ... [and] ... against unfair discrimination ... [, as well as] ... achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in education provision” (p. 4). It is therefore imperative that teachers demonstrate responsiveness to changing circumstances and restoration of social justice and adhere to specific democratic values and principles, such as human rights, human dignity, equality, non-discrimination, equity, freedom, and respect. Inclusive education and training systems are required, where teachers have the necessary strategies and interventions to cope with a wide range of learning and teaching needs (DOE, 2001a, b). The Education White Paper 6 draws attention to the importance of an inclusive approach, especially toward learners with special educational needs (DOE, 2001a, b).

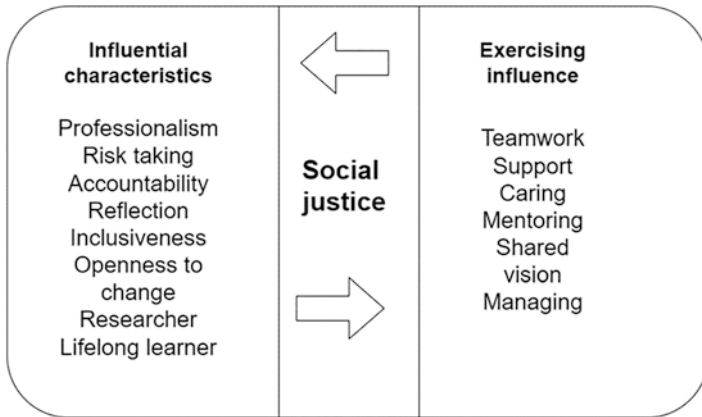


Fig. 8.3 Influential characteristics and exercising influence

Influential Characteristics

Documents were analyzed according to Webber’s (2018) attributes of TL and steered the researchers through the a priori coding to identify influential characteristics. Certain influential characteristics were identified from the document analysis. Figure 8.3 indicates these influential characteristics and how teacher leaders exercise influence.

Professionalism

Professionalism is an important characteristic as 13 of the documents emphasized that teachers always need to act professionally and adhere to certain professional requirements, standards, and development. It is necessary that teachers adhere to a code of professional ethics (South African Council for Educators Act, 2000), and they may not behave in a “disgraceful, improper or unbecoming manner” (Employment of Educators Act, 1998, p. 14) as it is expected of teachers to act in a professional manner (DBE, 2015). Teachers must therefore practice “and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others, ... uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society ... [and advocate] ... “the principles of academic integrity and the pursuit of excellence in the field of education” (MOE, 2000, p. 51). It is also required that teachers must “participate in departmental committees, seminars and courses in order to contribute to and/or update one’s professional views/standards” (DBE, 2016a, p. 20). Numerous documents emphasized the importance of all teachers being registered with the South African Council for Educators and other relevant professional bodies (DBE, 2016a; Employment of

Educators Act, 1998; MOE, 2000; National Education Policy Act, 1996; South African Schools Act, 1996).

The NDP 2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2012) stated that “teaching should be a highly valued profession” (p. 70) and “attention should be given to the continuing development of teachers and promotion of professional standards” (p. 303). Professional development creates the perfect opportunity for all teachers to improve their skills and knowledge and to expand their current teaching and learning approaches, practices, and methods (DBE, 2016a, b; DOE, 1995; MOE, 2000; Republic of South Africa, 2012). Continuous professional development initiatives and practices may be implemented by the Department of Education and schools through onsite training, meetings, workshops, seminars, and conferences, especially aimed at the empowerment of middle management (DBE, 2016a; DOE, 2001a, b; MOE, 1998, 2000). Structured programs offered to teachers should accommodate the need of each teacher to ensure that the emphasis of professional development is on ensuring expertise and specialization (DOE, 2001a, b, 2004; DBE, 2016a, b; Employment of Educators Act, 1998; MOE, 1998, 2000).

Risk Taking

Webber (2018) pointed out that in an educational environment where safety and trust are part of the school culture, teachers are usually encouraged to take the required risks. In current educational settings, there is continuous change and teachers sometimes must be courageous enough to take some risks. One document mentioned the aspect of taking risks saying that teachers should be creative with new ideas and always keep in mind the advancement of technology. However, the document did not refer to an environment that would increase risk taking. It is merely suggested that incentives can be given to teachers that would “facilitate technological change, experimentation with new ideas, and risk taking” (DOE, 2004, p. 26).

Accountability

Accountability was prominent in the documents, and this characteristic accentuated the importance that teacher leaders must take responsibility and be accountable for their actions. The White Paper on Education and Training accentuates that a “culture of accountability” should exist in education, where the necessary responsibility is taken and accountability is applied (DOE, 1995, p. 17). The NDP 2030 explicitly mentions “an education accountability chain, with lines of responsibility from state to classroom” (Republic of South Africa, 2012, p. 34). Teachers are held accountable for the academic standards of learners and subsequently the learners, and their own performance is monitored and measured on an ongoing basis according to certain requirements as mentioned in various acts and policies (DBE, 2016b;

Employment of Educators Act, 1998; National Education Policy Act, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 2012). Institutional governing bodies will also hold teachers “accountable for the quality of provision and the services provided” (MOE, 1998, p. 32). It is required that teachers strive toward “the principles of academic integrity and the pursuit of excellence in the field of education” (MOE, 2000, p. 51). Teachers have a responsibility toward “achieving the mission, vision and goals that have been set” (DBE, 2016b, p. 9) and ensure classroom discipline as their *in loco parentis* status signifies that they are held accountable for every learner placed in their care (South African Schools Act, 1996, p. 69).

Reflection

Reflection is a prerequisite for teachers to achieve academic standards, as reflection creates the opportunity for teachers to make the required changes for improvement toward excellence. Five documents indicated that reflective practice should be part of the teaching profession. Teachers leaders must reflect on numerous aspects such as learning barriers; ongoing development; their own professional practices and appropriate intervention strategies; teaching strategies and the value of various learning experiences; integrating HIV/AIDS knowledge into learning; the impact of change and ability to adapt; knowledge and experience of ethical issues; utilizing strategies to improve; and the influence of social justice on learning (DBE, 2015, 2016b; DOE, 2004; MOE, 2000; Republic of South Africa, 2012).

Inclusiveness

Teacher leaders form one of the pillars upon which successful education rests, and it is consequently important for them to be part of the decision-making process. The White Paper on Education and Training (DOE, 1995) underscored the “principle of democratic governance” (p. 17) and that all stakeholders should be involved. Furthermore, it signified that the “Ministry of Education is committed to a fully participatory process of curriculum development” (p. 22), which includes teachers as important stakeholders. The report of the task team on education management development (DOE, 1996) concentrated on the inclusiveness of management, where the emphasis is on involvement and collaboration, where “all members of [the] educational organization engage” (p. 16) and “management becomes much more inclusive” (p. 30). Education management development is regarded as “the key to decentralization and transformation that requires a broad and more inclusive understanding” and “can no longer be seen as being the preserve of the few” (DOE, 1996, p. 33). Two documents stipulated the inclusion of teachers in the school governing body if selected (DBE, 2016a; South African Schools Act, 1996). When teachers are

acting as teacher leaders, it is essential that they are given the opportunity to partake in school decision-making structures and activities, especially when the focus is on the development of policies, codes of conduct, or any other development initiatives (DBE, 2015, 2016a, b; MOE, 2000; South African Schools Act, 1996).

Openness to Change

As mentioned previously, education is characterized by continuous change and teachers must be open and willing to make the required changes. Two documents explicitly stated that teachers should “demonstrate responsiveness to changing circumstances and needs” (MOE, 2000, p. 85) and consequently must be “adaptable and responsive to change and political astuteness in situations of ambiguity, adversity or opposition” (DBE, 2016b, p. 4).

Researcher and Lifelong Learner

During the analysis process, a characteristic emerged that was deemed significant in the South African context. That is, some improvements and changes need to be based on research to apply the correct strategies and approaches to leadership. Teachers must participate in research that relates to academic improvement. Quality teaching and learning are associated with teachers undertaking systematic and sustainable research on their approaches, methodologies, educational problems, and learning areas (MOE, 2000; National Education Policy Act, 1996). Change is inevitable in education, and teachers need to “keep abreast of educational trends and developments” and it is vital to encourage the continuous development of teaching as a profession (South African Council for Educators Act, 2000, p. 18). The National Education Policy Act (1996) emphasized the significance of “providing opportunities for and encouraging lifelong learning” (p. 4), especially for training in information and communication technology (Republic of South Africa, 2012) and the efficient and sustainable use of e-learning methodologies (DOE, 2004).

How Teacher Leaders Exercise Influence

In the document analysis, some of the attributes of teacher leaders gave an indication of how they influence others as teacher leaders. The first way in which teacher leaders influence others is through teamwork.

Teamwork

Three documents mentioned teamwork as an attribute of teacher leaders. In some instances, the concept of teamwork did not directly feature, but was indicated using similar concepts, including collaborate, co-operate, share, partnership, jointly, peer learning, and team teaching (MOE, 2000; DBE, 2015, 2016a). Peer learning and team teaching are important activities where teacher leaders can influence by sharing knowledge and learning from one another (MOE, 2000; DBE, 2015). It is further indicated that teachers “co-operate with further and higher education institutions” (DBE, 2016a, p. 29) and “work in partnership with professional services” (MOE, 1999, p. 46).

Support

The importance of support to others was accentuated by two documents. It was made clear in both the documents that the teacher should fulfill a supportive role toward parents, learners, colleagues, department heads, the school management team (SMT), and the principal (MOE, 2000; DBE, 2016a). Teachers should be able to “demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators” (MOE, 2000, p. 85). Support is indicated in the Personnel Administrative Measures using the word “assist” quite often. This specific document accentuates the importance of assisting the principal in various aspects and activities regarding the learners, community, organizations, committees, and other stakeholders crucial to the school (DBE, 2016a).

Caring

Teacher leaders influence others through compassion and caring. Although care includes attending to the welfare of different stakeholders, the documents specifically focus on caring for learners and protecting them. This notion is emphasized in MOE (2002) stating that “Educators must take reasonable measures where necessary to prevent a learner from harming himself or herself or others” (p. 3). Three other documents also mentioned teachers fulfilling pastoral duties in the protection, progress, welfare, safety, and well-being of learners (DBE, 2016a; MOE, 2000; South African Council for Educators Act, 2000).

Mentoring

Mentorship as a way of influencing learners and fellow teachers was indicated by several documents. Teachers can act as mentors for student educators and colleagues or coaches for less experienced or inexperienced staff members (DBE, 2016a;

MOE, 1999, 2000; South African Council for Educators Act, 2000). Teacher leaders have “a professional obligation toward the education and induction into the profession of new members of the teaching profession” (South African Council for Educators Act, 2000, p. 18). Teacher leaders with experience are experts in their subject areas, and they should “feel at ease with the content and should be a role model with whom learners and student teachers can identify” (MOE, 1999, p. 16).

Shared Vision

Five documents indicated the importance of working toward a shared vision. It is important that teachers work “from a shared vision towards collectively agreed outcomes and by focusing on elements of teachers’ practice” (DBE, 2015, p. 7). Teacher leaders should influence others by “becoming instructional leaders who share the responsibility for achieving the mission, vision and goals that have been set” (DBE, 2016b, p. 9). There must be a “sense of unity of purpose,” and teachers must believe that they can make a difference (DBE, 2016a, p. 10). There should be a supportive management culture where “stakeholders feel ownership of the school’s mission and ethos” (DOE, 1996, p. 8). All stakeholders must be actively involved “in the realization of the mission” (DOE, 1996, p. 30) and the “development of a common purpose or mission” (DOE, 1995, p. 17) to create an environment that would enhance and cultivate a culture of school improvement.

Managing

Teacher leaders exercise influence specifically in their classrooms through various managing tasks. Apart from being “managers of the learning process” (DOE, 1996, p. 14), a teacher leader needs to be a manager in all other related areas, “managing classroom teaching of various kinds (individualized, small group etc.) in different educational contexts and particularly with large and diverse groups” (MOE, 2000, p. 50). In managing learning in the classroom, teachers need to manage all the aspects associated with teaching and learning, such as the learners, the school stock, textbooks, resources, planning, the curriculum, equipment, the budget for the department, and subject work schemes (DBE, 2016a; MOE, 2000).

Discussion

Teacher Leadership Spheres of Influence

In the document analysis, different spheres of influence of TL were identified. First is the classroom, where the teacher leads both curriculum issues and teaching and learning. Part of this leadership in the classroom is to transfer and live the values of

social justice to learners in the classroom by acknowledging cultural, racial, and gender differences as well as disabilities. Second is the larger school, where the teacher leader provides leadership in the learning area or subject, in the school phase, department of extramural program (including sports, culture, arts, etc.). Third, the teacher leader provides leadership beyond the boundaries of the school in the community, acting as cluster leaders or serving learning area committees and extra-curricular committees. In serving as a leader in the community, the teacher should understand social justice issues within the community such as the influence of poverty, health, and political democracy.

These spheres of influence concur with the zones identified by Grant (2006, 2008) or areas highlighted by other authors (e.g., De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012; Grant et al., 2010). In all these spheres of influence, teacher leaders should show a sensitivity to the restoration of social justice in their leadership of others.

Influencing the Restoration of Social Justice

The education system in South Africa and its procedures were “discriminatory, non-participatory and managed neither efficiently nor effectively” during the apartheid era (Grant, 2010, p. 26). After the establishment of democracy in 1994, all spheres in South African society, including education, were determined to restore social justice and heal the divisions of the past. Focusing on equality, non-discrimination, democracy, as well as racial, cultural, gender, language and religious issues, almost half of the documents analyzed emphasized a sensitivity toward and restoration of social justice. The focus of many documents was on respecting and protecting human rights. This emphasis could be attributed not only to South Africa’s historical and political past but also to the socioeconomic context. These contextual influences on the conceptualization as well as manifestation of teacher leadership are recognized by several authors (e.g., De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012; Grant et al., 2010; Hallinger, 2018a). Grant et al. (2010) rightfully acknowledged this aspect by stating, “Teacher leadership is likely to vary depending on the historical, cultural and institutional settings in which it is situated.” This is particularly pertinent in South Africa where the apartheid legacy with its dysfunctional schooling system has “not simply disappeared” (p. 405). In the words of Harris and Jones (2019), “the centrality of teachers influencing the process of school transformation and educational change” (p. 124), the role of teacher leaders in restoring social justice becomes evident.

Within the classroom as an area of influence, teacher leaders are expected to model respect and protection of human rights to the learners. Teacher leaders should make sure that no acts of discrimination occur within or outside of the classroom.

Influential Characteristics of Teacher Leadership

Some characteristics in the document analysis correlated with the identified attributes of Webber (2018). In the document analysis, another influential characteristic, *research and lifelong learner* emerged. The following influential characteristics occurred from the document analysis.

In the teaching profession, *professionalism* is considered an important characteristic as it was evident in the document analysis. It is expected of teachers to demonstrate their professionalism in all their actions, decisions, and endeavors, encouraging that the professional standards of the teaching profession and the code of professional ethics are upheld at all times. Teachers in South Africa must be registered as professionals with the South African Council for Educators in order to be appointed as teacher. The analysis also emphasized the importance of professional development, which would lead to professional growth especially when teachers are exposed to development opportunities in leadership. It is important that leadership development programs that build knowledge, skills, and competency are included in pre- and in-service teacher training (Pineda-Baez et al., 2020). Grant (2006) claimed, “One way to restore the dignity and professionalism of teachers, is to develop a culture of TL and distributed leadership in schools where teachers are able to reclaim their voices and where principals are able to regain their legitimacy” (p. 528).

Risk taking is an influential characteristic of TL, but only one document mentioned this characteristic. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) pointed out that it is important that an environment characterized by effective collaboration and open communication be established, where teachers can take calculated risks to ensure ongoing improvement. Pineda-Baez et al. (2020) and Webber (2018) emphasized that a culture of collaboration and trusting relationships are essential fundamentals for teachers to take the required risks and make the essential changes for improved teaching and learning. School management in South African schools should foster an environment in which teachers feel safe and are encouraged to propose new initiatives and take risks. Teachers are change agents and should come up with new ideas and initiatives. Harris and Muijs (2005) pointed out that TL needs to be “facilitated and embraced as a cultural norm within the school” (p. 120). Grant (2006) accentuated that TL is about courage and risk taking. De Villiers and Pretorius (2011) also encouraged teachers to take the initiative.

Teachers are held *accountable* for aspects related to teaching and learning, such as curriculum coverage, quality of their work, academic results, work performance, discipline, and implementing change. De Villiers and Pretorius (2011) stated that accountability is embedded in the definition of TL, and teachers take on more responsibility (Pineda-Baez et al., 2020). Harris and Muijs (2005) agreed that TL involves “taking responsibility and accepting some accountability” (p. 42). TL allows the teacher to take “ownership of a particular change or development” (Harris, 2003, p. 79). Accountability and responsibility are associated with the

teacher leader being a professional. Teachers that accept accountability for their actions will ensure that academic standards are achieved and maintained.

Reflection is an essential characteristic of TL. Teacher leaders need to be reflective practitioners to ensure that continuous improvement takes place (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011, 2012; Grant, 2019; Grant et al., 2010). According to De Villiers and Pretorius (2012), reflection implies being critical of one's own practices and reflecting on one's own pedagogy.

In most documentation, the importance of the *inclusion* of teachers in decision-making is accentuated. Teacher leaders need to get the opportunity to make decisions and be part of shared decision-making or collective decision-making (Mancoko, 2015). Grant et al. (2010) accentuated that participation in decision-making leads to greater organizational dedication, job satisfaction, and efficiency. Driescher (2016) indicated that participation in decision-making ensures more commitment to the decisions made and creates relationships of trust. *Inclusiveness* links TL to distributed leadership. Grant (2008) indicated that there should be a redistribution of power so that teachers get the opportunity to develop and grow as teacher leaders. Muijs and Harris (2003) stated that TL "reclaims school leadership from the individual to the collective, from the singular to the plural and offers the real possibility of distributed leadership in action" (p. 445). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) accentuated that participatory decision-making creates the opportunity for TL to act and become part of processes and strategies that would lead to school improvement. Inclusion further implies that teachers are part of decision-making structures within the school, for example, serving on the school governing body, taking part in the development of policies, and establishing the code of conduct within the school. Grant (2008) confirmed that when teacher leaders are part of the decision-making process, it can lead to overall school improvement and commitment.

Openness to change as an influential characteristic was suggested in a few documents. Teacher leaders are envisioned as agents of change (Driescher, 2016; Grant, 2006, 2019). Some authors not only see teacher leaders as change agents but emphasize that teacher leaders should initiate and lead change within the school (Driescher, 2016; Grant, 2006). Harris and Muijs (2005) pointed out that TL motivates teachers to make required changes to ensure school improvement. Grant (2019) stated that teachers often "do all sorts of innovative and interesting activities, often in hostile contexts and with little or no support" (p. 51).

The final influential characteristic that emerged was *researchers and lifelong learners*. This characteristic is associated with the reflective practice of teacher leaders. Change is part of school improvement, and part of a teacher's repertoire is being a change agent. Teachers should be involved in action research in their learning areas to inform their decisions. It is important that teachers continuously learn about new technologies, approaches, and methodologies. In this regard, Grant (2006) emphasized that teacher leaders should "continually research and evaluate their work to change and improve it" (p. 520). Teacher leaders should thus be equipped with skills to enable them to do action research, which should be incorporated in initial teacher training and professional development (Muijs & Harris,

2007). School improvement is linked to the continuous development and learning of teachers (Muijs & Harris, 2007).

How Teacher Leaders Exercise Influence

The influence of teacher leaders is enacted through their actions. In the words of Harris and Jones (2019), “the idea of teacher leadership as action going beyond their formally assigned classroom roles” (p. 124). *Teamwork* as an essential way of exercising influence came to the fore in some of the documents. One of the influential skills attributed to teacher leaders is the ability to work with others (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011). Teamwork is described in many documents as collaboration. Teamwork and collaboration include working together, sharing ideas, peer learning, and team teaching. This collaboration takes place within the school with other teachers, but also with teachers from other schools (Grant, 2006). Through the development of new understandings and practices that are shared, collaboration contributes to school improvement and success (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012). Team structures help teachers to execute leadership (Naiker & Mestry, 2011). Collaboration and teamwork can only thrive when a culture within the school that promotes collaborative practice and collective decision-making are established by the school principal and management (Mancoko, 2015).

Another action of influence is through the *support* teacher leaders give and receive. The literature indicated that teacher leadership can only manifest in a supportive environment and that school managers are responsible for establishing a school culture that is supportive (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012); specifically, the role of the school principal in the support of TL is critical (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leaders can only support others in an environment where support is given and allowed. Support from teacher leaders was very prominent in the documentation. According to the documents, teacher leaders should provide support to different stakeholders, including school managers, fellow teachers, learners, and parents, as well as stakeholders in the school community (Cosenza, 2015; De Villiers & Pretorius, 2012; Driescher, 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Mentorship is seen as part of the informal dimension of teacher leadership and could include colleagues in the same school or other schools. Mentorship is further indicated as a core function of TL in the support and development of teachers (Grant et al., 2010; Driescher, 2016). Teachers’ management skills could be enhanced through mentorship (Muijs & Harris, 2007).

Influencing others to work toward a *shared vision* is seen as an attribute of TL (Webber, 2018) that became evident in the document analysis. When teachers are part of and influence the vision development of the school, they share the responsibility of achieving this shared vision. Being visionary is one of the most important qualities of a teacher leader (Mancoko, 2015). Teachers who collaborate in a shared vision influence others to improve teaching and learning in the school (De Villiers

& Pretorius, 2011). It is therefore important for school managers to make teachers part of the process in establishing a vision for the school and to continuously revisit their vision for the school.

Implications and Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was not to present a clear definition of the meaning of TL, but one of the commonalities that emerged from the literature was the fact that teacher leaders have the power to influence. In South African official documentation, the notion of teachers being leaders is indicated clearly. It is expected of teachers to fulfill leadership roles within the classroom and beyond. It is therefore evident that TL must be regarded as a powerful instrument for sustained school improvement and an essential component to ensure that social justice practices are applied throughout the different spheres of influence. The restoration of social justice in South Africa is one of the key focuses of the South African government, which is clearly depicted in different policies and legislation. Although policies and official documents advocate social justice in South African schools, it cannot be taken for granted that all social injustices from the past have been eradicated and that leadership implements social justice practices.

Teacher leaders as key role players and agents of change can address social injustices of the past and also have an influence on school improvement. Teacher leaders in South Africa can exert influence on other stakeholders, including fellow teachers, learners, and school management, as well as community members by modeling actions that speak to the restoration of social justice. In a country where social challenges like poverty, unemployment, inadequate health care, etc., still prevail, such an influence, specifically on learners confronted with these social challenges, could create a sense of hope. Teacher leaders should participate in continuous professional development. Teacher leaders as well as school principals and SMTs should take note of the ways in which teacher leaders exercise influence. Teacher leaders should exercise influence through networking, professional development, inclusivity in decision-making, and distributive leadership practices within the school.

In South Africa, there is currently an emphasis on the training of school leaders through formal qualifications as well as professional development opportunities. However, it is essential that stakeholders such as the Department of Education, principals, and SMTs embrace the power of influence of TL and create development opportunities for teachers to gain knowledge and skills regarding TL as well as practices to restore social justice. According to various authors (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011; Driescher, 2016; Grant, 2019), some teachers seem to be unaware of their roles as leaders. They need to be empowered as leaders for formal and informal leadership positions. Future research, specifically in the South African context, may place emphasis on the specific roles of teacher leaders within schools and how the power of influence could be utilized in these roles.

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Chapter 9

Teacher Leaders: A Challenge for Initial Teacher Education in Spain



Cristina Moral-Santaella  and Antonio J. Sánchez-Lamolda

Abstract The action-research study presented in this chapter shows the process followed to improve the practicum program of the Primary Education Degree of the Faculty of Education of Granada through a new practicum model based on the teacher leader approach. The purpose of this new practicum model for the training of future teachers is not only to improve the professionalizing potential of teachers but also to guide it toward the training of future teacher leaders. The results obtained after promoting this new practicum model are very positive, although at the same time it should be noted that it causes some resistance since the figure of the teacher leader is not recognized in Spain. Therefore, this chapter helps identify a series of problems and possible solutions to improve the training of future teachers, with the figure of the teacher leader as its ultimate goal.

Keywords Teacher leader · Teacher education · Practicum · Mentoring teacher

Introduction

The research presented here is the result of an action-research study initiated in 2018 at the Faculty of Education of Granada by a group of supervising teacher educators of the primary education undergraduate practicum program. The purpose of this action-research study has been to improve the practicum program with the ultimate goal of training authentic teacher leaders, who would be perceived as agents for the educational and social change that Spanish society needs (Moral-Santaella, 2021; Moral-Santaella et al., 2021).

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Throughout the years in which this action-research study has been in development (2018–2021), a school tutor-mentor of the practicum program, who can be described as an authentic teacher leader, was especially interested in contributing to the practicum improvement project. In 2020, he started supporting the project from his position as tutor-mentor of the practicum program and teacher leader.

The authors of this text are, therefore, a school tutor-mentor of the practicum program and a supervising teacher educator of the Faculty of Education of Granada. We share our experience in relation to this action-research study, which aims to test a new approach to the design of the practicum program, starting from the figure of the teacher leader as the focal point.

To recount our experience, we would begin by reviewing the importance of teacher leadership and the state of affairs in Spain in relation to the figure of the teacher leader. How it can be positioned within the current Spanish teacher education model will be shown, and under what conditions it can be developed during the practicum period. Next, we will explain the procedure followed and the research methodology used to show results and demonstrate that the new practicum model proposed by this action-research study is having positive effects on the education of preservice teachers.

This work develops two fundamental ideas: the need to start training teacher leaders from the practicum period and the need to have teacher leaders capable of following that direction in training.

Teacher Leadership and Educational Change

Throughout the history of education, it has been fully recognized and accepted that teachers are the factor that has the greatest impact on the quality of teaching, based on this premise: “the quality of the education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 19). Currently, the promoters of teacher leadership emphasize this idea by focusing the attention on highlighting that teacher agency and their professional influence are critical components for school improvement and change (Harris et al., 2017). A positive relationship has been found between teacher leadership, teacher collaboration, and capacity building for school improvement (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Muijs & Harris, 2006). Distributed leadership has been shown to create opportunities to give value to teacher voices and promote high levels of teacher involvement and improvement (Harris, 2014). Teacher leadership breaks down the vertical school leadership hierarchy. From the motto “leading from the middle”, the figure of the teacher leader emerges as a key factor for school improvement. The teacher leader is considered the true instigator, creator, and implementer of educational change. Contrary to the trend that perceives teachers as passive recipients of changes coming from the top down, or as a tool of political deliberations, teachers are now perceived as agents and leaders to actively contribute to leading change (Harris et al., 2017).

In the literature on teacher leadership, there are different definitions. York-Barr and Duke (2004) defined teacher leadership as a “process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (p. 287). According to Wenner and Campbell (2017), teacher leadership is associated with the activities and responsibilities that teachers carry out outside the classroom: “teacher leaders somehow go above and beyond their typical duties” (p. 140). On the contrary, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) considered that teacher leaders “lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others towards improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership” (p. 6). The combination of these two last definitions led Nguyen et al. (2020) to consider that “teacher leadership can happen within and beyond the classroom, and that teaching and leadership are integrated” (p. 61).

Teacher leadership activities can be formal and informal. Informal leadership activities “*permeate a school ... and depend on teacher interests and the needs of the particular school ... within a community of professional learners*” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 121). Teacher leaders in formal roles include instructional coaches, lead teachers, mentors, staff developers, counselors, and others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). According to York-Barr and Duke (2004), the work of teacher leaders encompasses seven dimensions of practice: coordination, management; school or district curriculum work; professional development of colleagues; participation in school improvement; parent and community involvement; contribution to the profession; and preservice teacher education. Angelle and DeHart (2016) synthesized the functions of teacher leaders, such as sharing experiences and sharing leadership. Focusing on instructional leadership competence:

... expertise is the foundational dimension of teacher leadership teacher leads within the classroom through excellence in teaching ... Beyond the classroom, teacher leaders serve as mentors, coaches, teacher trainers, curriculum specialist, or simply as willing listeners ... and provide critically needed support to beginning teachers ... or as mentors to others who are seeking certification for Professional Teaching Standards. (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 103)

Nevertheless, according to Hanusin et al. (2014):

... all these functions (of teacher leaders) that support school change ... can ultimately be linked back to improving student learning, and thus may appear to be no more than ‘good teaching’, what distinguishes the teacher from the ‘teacher leader’ is purposeful and intentional action that emerges from teachers’ own desire to lead’, rather than seeking to accomplish what is requested by others. (p. 208)

In relation to the knowledge and skills that teacher leaders must have, some authors consider that they must not only have knowledge and skills as teachers but also specific leadership skills (Acquaro, 2019; Acquaro & Gurr, 2022b; Grossman & Richert, 1996). Teacher leaders must have knowledge about collaborative work, mentoring, action research, professional induction, etc.; they must also have a commitment to improvement, even to struggle in conditions of risk and uncertainty, to investigate and improve more than to accept what has already been prescribed; at

the same time, the teacher leader must be an expert in subjects and content areas (Borko et al., 2014; Grossman & Richert, 1996). There is a series of attributes and indicators of teacher leadership: accountability, advocacy, cultural responsiveness, collaboration, openness to change, professionalism, reflection, risk-taking, shared vision, stability, and teamwork (Webber, 2021a).

However, it should be noted that the figure of the teacher leader also presents a series of challenges and difficulties: deciding to accept a leadership role; building principal/teacher leader relationships; working with peers; and facilitating professional learning for self and others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). In addition, it must be kept in mind that the idea of a teacher leader provokes different reactions (Harris, 2003). In some cases, teacher leadership can be considered like heresy. Teacher leadership equalizes positions and eliminates hierarchies, which can lead to some backlash. In other cases, teacher leadership can be seen as a mere fantasy, as distributed leadership is finally reduced to a mere delegation of functions. But it can also be considered as a possibility when leadership is spread out within the school organization and considered a shared responsibility.

For teacher leadership to emerge, the training of teacher leaders from the initial education of teachers has been highlighted recently. Campbell et al. (2018) and Webber (2021b) provided training courses on these subjects in Canada, while Acquaro and Gurr (in press; accepted) highlighted others in Australia. These authors consider the potential of introducing leadership studies in initial teacher education to prepare the next generation of school leaders. Preservice teachers must come to understand the extent of school leadership and the possibility of building better capacity for change through teacher leadership.

Although great progress is being made in the study of teacher leadership and its training possibilities (Acquaro & Gurr, 2022a, b; Campbell et al., 2018; Webber, 2021b), in Spain research on leadership has focused on the study of principal leadership and little research has been done on teacher leadership (Gratacós et al., 2021). Teacher leadership in Spain is perceived as distributed leadership, leadership for social justice, or leadership for learning (Gratacós et al., 2021). The Talis 2018 report (OECD, 2019) referred to the figure of the teacher leader, but the report showed a lack of definition of this figure, which is only associated with functions related to the ability to carry out autonomous decision-making on teaching-learning issues, but not in relation to the diversity of possibilities that a teacher leader can carry out in the school to facilitate and contribute to change and educational improvement. The official initial teacher education programs that take into account the figure of the teacher leader are non-existent in Spain.

Teacher Leadership in Initial Teacher Education Programs

This lack of consideration for the figure of teacher leaders in Spain should be added to the current debate and criticism surrounding teacher education programs. The basis of these criticisms is directly related to the need for a coherent and unified

theory of teaching that supports teacher education programs. The Conference of Spanish Deans (2017) and the Department of Education in Spain (Marina et al., 2015) highlighted this lack of consensus on the future direction for teacher education in Spain. However, although this lack of definition exists in some contexts, there are also some authors who clearly identify teaching as a demanding job that requires a large amount of energy, passion, and strength, as well as a combination of technical, intellectual, and emotional aspects (Day, 2017), to acquire the professional capital for the teaching profession (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) that finally allows them to become teacher leaders, instigators of reforms and changes (Harris et al., 2017).

According to Acquaro and Gurr (2022a), in many jurisdictions the definition of “teacher leader” has been used to regulate the teaching profession. For example, in Australia, there are four career stages specified – graduate, proficient, high accomplished and lead teachers – with leadership expectations increasing along the career progression. There are also some teacher standards in Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, UK, or USA (Call, 2018).

However, in these countries, not only is it identified as the last step in the chain for the definition of the teaching profession, but also, although in an emerging process, the need to include the concept of teacher leader from the initial teacher education program has been considered. In this way, the foundations for the emergence of future teacher leaders are facilitated. In countries like Canada (Campbell et al., 2018; Webber, 2021a; Webber & Nickel, 2021), Australia (Acquaro & Gurr, 2022b), or Scotland (King et al., 2019b), there is an emerging work approach in the initial education of future teacher leaders. According to Acquaro and Gurr (2022a), there are different countries such as the United States, England, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, or Singapore, which are developing initial teacher education programs in which the introduction of leadership concepts and skills through leadership focused subjects are taken as part of teacher training.

Hanuscin et al. (2014) considered the difficulty in building the identity of teachers as leaders. According to King et al. (2019b), in order to train future teacher leaders, leadership learning must be planned within the teacher education program. The shortcoming or complaint highlighted by these authors is that initial teacher education programs, in any case, prepare teachers as professionals, but not as leaders. It is also necessary to develop in future teachers a professional identity as leaders. For this, a differentiation must be established between professionalism and leadership.

Acquaro and Gurr (2022b) considered that the figure of the teacher leader is an attraction for those who question whether to choose the teaching profession or not. Overcoming the mere professional level and ascending to the leader level can serve as a stimulus when choosing the teaching profession. Talking to future teachers about their figure as “teacher leaders” and not as mere technicians who will carry out principal orders is stimulating. This attractiveness and stimulus associated with the concept of the “teacher leader” is something essential to highlight when planning initial teacher education programs and attracting the best students to the ranks of the teaching profession (Acquaro & Gurr, 2022a).

In the Spanish context, it should be noted that there are no professional standards, nor a teacher education program with the figure of the teacher leader as a reference, as is the case in other countries. In Spain, there is a code of ethics (Tiana, 2011b) to identify the role of the teacher, and a series of functions regarding their performance are set up in the new LOMLOE education law (BOE 2020). These functions are a copy of the functions that had to be fulfilled in the previous LOE education law promulgated in 2006 (BOE, 2006). There is no progress or evolution regarding the teaching functions, which continue to be associated with the typical functions of the teaching profession.

The White Book for Teacher Education recognizes that the teaching profession is poorly defined, even going so far as to say, “some academics question that teaching is a profession, but instead identify it with a mere occupation” (Marina et al., 2015, p. 28). Teacher education is also lacking in prestige. According to the White Book for Teacher Education, “teacher training in Spain is the chronicle of bewilderment” (Marina et al., 2015, p. 39), especially because in Spain there is no consensus on basic questions about education such as teacher education (Tiana, 2015), and it needs conceptual and organizational coherence (Escudero, 2019). Various studies, such as those by Manso and Martos-Garrido (2021), Egido (2021), López-Rupérez et al. (2021), and even the Conference of Deans of all Spanish Faculties of Education (2017), point to the lack of quality in initial teacher education and the urgent need for a reform of the teacher education model.

In the same direction as Marina et al. (2015), the current Secretary of State for Education postulates the need to “shape the teaching profession” (Tiana, 2015, p.192). Tiana (2011a, 2015) considered that it is not yet well defined, nor motivated or rewarded. To “shape the teaching profession,” he proposed improving their salary, the access to training programs, the initial education model, and the professional induction and development model, in an attempt, as Tiana stated (2011), to achieve a more “rigorous, demanding and ultimately more prestigious teacher education model” (Tiana, 2011a, p. 21).

Training Teacher Leaders Through the Practicum Program

One of the functions associated with the practice of a teacher leader is to carry out preservice teacher education tasks (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Preservice education and, specifically, practicum periods are key times for teacher training. Future teachers recognize that theoretical training is to some extent incoherent and is not as useful for them as practical training in order to become teachers (Canrines et al., 2019; Moral-Santaella, 2021). Therefore, practicum periods are key times for the socialization of teachers and the construction of their professional identity. They are also crucial in forging the idea of a teacher not only as a professional but as a leader.

Teachers-tutors-mentors for preservice teachers in training take on a leading role insofar as they can serve as examples of teacher leaders and facilitate the construction of the professional identity of future teachers based on this image of teacher

leader. According to Gebreck (1988), mentors of preservice teachers during practicum periods are first and foremost teachers, but they must also be “successful leaders”:

Mentors are, first and foremost, teachers ... but mentors have always been much more than master teachers. They also serve as coach, positive role model, developer of talent, opener of doors, protector, sponsor and successful leader. In order to assume these roles, the mentor must be more mature, more advanced, or more experienced – not a peer. (p. 43)

Therefore, practicum periods that have mentor teachers conceived as “*successful leaders*,” as conceived by Gebreck (1988), can be a good time to exercise teacher leadership and to acquire the practical skills of a teacher leader. However, in the Spanish context, practicums present some specific difficulties and peculiarities that have dragged on for decades, especially in relation to the lack of a professionalizing practicum program (Moral-Santaella et al., 2021), which make it even more difficult to perceive practicum as a period for training teacher leaders. Tiana (2015) and Manso and Garrido-Martos (2021) considered that teacher practical training has serious deficiencies, although its importance is recognized since practicums constitute the first real contact with a school and are the first moment in the construction of the professional identity (Pérez-Gómez, 2019; Zabalza, 2011). Moral-Santaella (2021) analyzed the current Spanish practicum program, taking as reference previous works by González-Sanmamed (2015) and Arias et al. (2017), concluding that all Spanish universities propose a similar practicum model with a series of curricular-based inconsistencies.

The first curricular component of the practicum model is related to the objectives it aims to achieve and the competences it proposes to develop in preservice teachers. Although the practicum is primarily aimed at the process of linking the theory taught at university with the practice observed in the school as a means for acquiring teaching competences (instrumental, personal, emotional, social, and systemic competences) (Pérez-Gómez, 2019; Rodríguez-Gómez et al., 2017; Tejada, 2013), preservice teachers believe that these objectives are not fully met (Moral-Santaella, 2021). They consider that there are great deficiencies in the connection between theory and practice during the practicum period. They generally believe that the theory they have received has not been a determining factor in their training as teachers and that the teaching skills they have acquired are the result of the personal experience they have had during their practicum period. From these responses, it can be deduced that the dominant professional culture observed during the practicum period will determine the construction of the teaching identity (Moral-Santaella, 2021).

The practicum model is characterized by the production of a practice report, called a report, dossier, practice work, portfolio, etc., to facilitate the process of linking theory and practice, which is often used as an evaluation tool (Arias et al., 2017; González-Sanmamed, 2015). This report maintains an inflexible structure that usually requires observation and description of different teaching-learning elements (school context, teaching methodology, assessment, discipline, class climate, etc.) (Gallego et al., 2009). The diary is another typical instrument of practicums,

which can be associated with the danger of not generating an adequate reflection on what is observed, but a mere description of the practice (Zabalza, 2011).

For all these reasons, the proposed methodology in the practicum model is based on a simple observation of the practicum since the production of the report and the diary uses material that does not help reflection on professional teaching competences but rather facilitates a descriptive process of what is observed (Moral-Santaella, 2021). Without a guide to reflect on the teaching competences that would allow for the identification of a true teacher leader, everything will remain a mere superficial observation, with little depth and meaning. The “*Apprenticeship of Observation*” referred to by Lortie (1975), widely criticized by many authors such as Darling-Hammond (2006b), as a methodological principle incompatible with an adequate teacher education model, prevails in the Spanish practicum model (Moral-Santaella, 2021). Teachers in training consider that the practice report has been of little use to them in acquiring their teaching skills because it has consisted of a mere description of what was observed in school, and they even found the production of the diary boring and tedious (Moral-Santaella, 2021).

Finally, in relation to the school context where the practicum is carried out, and where preservice teachers, the supervising university, and school mentor-tutors interact, the Conference of Deans speaks of the need to find “model schools” to contextualize initial teacher education programs (Deans Conference, 2017). However, as Egido (2021) pointed out, there is a problem with the selection and accreditation of the educational schools where new teachers will be in residence. According to the opinion of preservice teachers, the schools where they have carried out their practicums basically use a traditional teaching model, where the image of individualized, uncollaborative, routine, and easy-to-follow teaching is conveyed, without proposals for innovation, change, or research for improvement (Moral-Santaella, 2021). In relation to the selection of tutors, it is also associated with a series of problems. Tutor and supervisor teachers have the role of ensuring the theory-practice connection by unifying academic and professional discourse, but Martínez-Figueira and Raposo (2011) or Zabalza and Cid (1998) considered that Spanish tutor-supervisor teachers act without a coherent and systematized organization of their tasks. Egido (2021) considered that there are no teacher evaluation systems in place to identify those teachers who are best qualified to act as tutors.

Although in the Spanish context the figure of the tutor-mentor teacher is poorly defined, there are other authors, such as Kang (2021) or Kavanagh et al. (2020), who have identified the role of tutor-mentor teachers. These tutor-mentor teachers must establish a close relationship with the university, but unfortunately in some cases this relationship between school and university does not exist and they come to be considered as two separate worlds, two disconnected continents, which may even have contradictory purposes. In one world, there is theory, while in another, there is practice. There may even be competing demands, which ultimately leads preservice teachers to teach as they have learned (Burroughs et al., 2020; Lortie, 1975). For Canrinues et al. (2019), the school and the university must work in collaboration not only on technical issues but also on deciding the purpose of the initial education program.

The tutor-mentor teacher, who should be understood as a teacher leader (Gebrke, 1988), performs a series of functions that are basically associated with the functions of modeling, providing feedback and promoting experimentation. Orland-Barak and Wang (2021) considered that the functions of mentors should be to encourage reflection on core practices from a critical approach. To do this, they recommend breaking down core practices and rehearsing core teaching to see how its components work in different contexts. They considered teaching knowledge as inherently problematic, and preservice teachers need to develop a critical stance to reconceptualize it. During the practicum period, teaching needs to be radically questioned and renewed and for this, the figure of the mentor teacher is essential.

However, there are some authors who consider that mentors lack the preparation to be ready to provide high-quality support and feedback for their students. Although mentors have teaching experience, they may not be prepared to be effective mentors. Even though the teachers who tutor future teachers during the practicum period can be very effective educational mentors, these mentors are chosen almost at random and are associated with the figure of mere animators or cooperators (Stanulis et al., 2019). Students learn from them merely by observation since they do not facilitate any process of modeling, feedback, or reflection on practice. But being just cheerleaders or just cooperators is not sufficient (Stanulis et al., 2019).

The school–university connection is suggested as a hope for finding answers to solve many of the practicum problems (Burroughs et al., 2020), although in Spain it is also recognized that the relationship between school and university is inadequate (Gortazar & Zubillaga 2019). Some consider that it should be built in “a third space” (Zeichner, 2010), where it is possible to work collaboratively between school and university, and where there are no relations of power, knowledge, or authority, but school–university alliances in action as a promise of change (Day et al., 2021).

Method

Objective of the Research

Recognizing the shortcomings and difficulties presented by the current Spanish practicum model, and the characteristics that an adequate practicum model for the training of teacher leaders should have, the study presented here shows the experience of the development and implementation of a practicum model for the training of teacher leaders. The most outstanding features of this new practicum model are that it addresses the serious problems encountered in the period of institutionalized practicum training for teachers in Spain and has as its ultimate goal the training of teacher leaders. The most outstanding features of this new practicum model are as follows:

- Its ultimate point of reference is the figure of the teacher leader, and this figure gives coherence to the practicum program.

- It is based on the premise that there must be a link between theory and practice for a true training process to occur. To this end, it connects theory with practice through the development of teaching skills that are aimed at the training of teacher leaders, avoiding the production of merely descriptive documents such as reports or diaries.
- It establishes a direct connection between the supervising teacher at the university and the tutor-mentor at school, who are assumed to be teacher leaders.
- It avoids apprenticeship of observation by proposing a methodology that requires reflection and critical questioning about the components of core teaching practice and on the basis of knowledge that supports the performance of a teacher leader.
- It is focused on competences that ensure the training of future teacher leaders and not only on professional teaching competences.

Based on this new practicum model, we believe that future teachers will be better trained to deal with the complexity of teaching from a teacher leader approach. Therefore, our starting hypothesis of this action-research study (McNiff, 2013) is to check whether preservice teachers who follow this new practicum model will be better prepared to become teacher leaders by showing a more sophisticated, expert, and professional thinking about teaching than those who do not follow it.

The methodology to test the starting hypothesis maintains features of a mixed methodology (Hall, 2020). A visual test is applied to verify the differences in response of the groups of preservice teachers who receive training with the new practicum model and those who do not (Chi et al., 1988; Woff et al., 2017). In addition, it employs individual interviews and semi-structured group interviews to collect more qualitative information in relation to the development and implementation of the practicum model (King et al., 2019a, b).

Instruments

To carry out this new practicum model, a series of guided reflective activities on teaching competencies related to the knowledge and skills of a teacher leader have been developed (Moral-Santaella, 2018). This practicum material is based on a theoretical document that aims to lay the foundations and competencies necessary for the development of a teacher leader, manager of change and improvement, capable of designing quality teaching experiences that ultimately impact the improvement of student learning (Moral-Santaella, 2019). The preparation of the practicum material has followed the line of analysis of competencies suggested by Grossman (2018) and Forzani (2014) to discover the “fine grain of teaching practice” (Darling-Hammond, 2006a, p. 308) and to be able to analyze its possibilities of transformation and improvement, exceeding the typical model of “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975). For the preparation of this material, the works by Pollard (2014), Gravells (2017), Blachford (2017), Baker et al. (2017), Capel et al.

(2016), Sellars (2017), and the referents of the effective leadership model for improvement and change proposed by Day et al. (2011) and Gurr (2017) have been used. The reflection model used was established by Van Manen (1977) and addressed technical, practical, and critical reflection. The list of activities included in the developed materials is aimed at a reflection on the professional identity of the teacher, the competencies for the design and development of significant learning experiences (class climate, objectives, knowledge of the subject, didactic knowledge of the material, didactic design, etc.), and finally the figure of the teacher leader. The first versions of the guided reflection material on teaching competencies were prepared by the supervising teachers at the university (Moral-Santaella, 2018), although the latest version has been produced through collaborative work between the supervising teachers at the university and the mentor-tutors at the school, overcoming dissociation between school and university and maintaining a collaborative and professional relationship for the improvement of the practicum program (Moral-Santaella & Sánchez-Lamolda, 2021). Appendix shows two examples of guided reflection activities, one on the subject of the development of “Metacognition in Class” and the other in relation to “The Teacher Researcher”.

The visual test used to verify the differences in response of the trained and untrained group of preservice teachers is a test generally used in the comparative study of expert professionals and beginners (Chi et al., 1988; Woff et al., 2017). The visual test consisted of showing five images of primary schools taken from the Internet. Each image was projected for a period of 5 min and students were asked to write an explanatory comment about what they saw in them. These visual tests were carried out to check the differences in the degree of elaboration and complexity of the responses of the trained and untrained groups of preservice teachers. It is assumed that a teacher leader is characterized by being a more expert teacher capable of capturing the complexity of teaching and giving a more effective response to improve student learning.

To obtain the opinion of school tutors who tutored the preservice teachers trained group about the new practicum model, they were interviewed by the supervisor during the final session of the practicum period with a semi-structured individual and group interview (King et al., 2019a). This interview had the purpose of answering the question of whether they had found the material used to direct reflection on teaching competencies and obtain more targeted training to the figure of teacher leaders appropriate and useful.

Population and Sample

The sample used to test the hypothesis of the effectiveness of this practicum is made up of a group of preservice teachers trained with the new model and a group of preservice teachers untrained with the new model. The trained group consisted of 50 male and female students belonging to four groups of the practicum program for the Degree of Primary School Teachers, who have used materials for guided reflection

on teaching competencies developed by Moral-Santaella (2018, 2019) and Moral-Santaella and Sánchez-Lamolda (2021). The untrained group consisted of 50 male and female students belonging to three groups of the practicum program for the Degree of Primary Education Teachers, followed the material provided by the Faculty of Education of Granada and not the new guided reflection material (Pérez-García et al., 2013). The group of tutor teachers who have participated in the study belongs to the trained group and consists of 45 tutor teachers, 39 women and 6 men, aged between 28 and 50 years.

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to explain the research procedure followed, we must start by saying that the structure of the practicum at the Faculty of Education of Granada presents a series of peculiarities that have conditioned the development of this project. Each year, supervising teachers at the university each supervise the practicum of approximately 20 preservice teachers, and each preservice teacher is assigned a tutor in a primary school. The study has been developed through face-to-face contacts and visits to each one of the school tutors of the trained groups by the university supervising teacher to explain the new practicum model objective and show the new material prepared to guide the reflection on competencies for teacher leader training (Moral-Santaella, 2018, 2019; Moral-Santaella & Sánchez-Lamolda, 2021). When face-to-face attendance has not been possible due to the COVID pandemic, meetings with tutor teachers have been carried out through Google Meet sessions. Throughout this experience, one of the tutor teachers contacted, the co-author of this report, showed a special interest in participating in the improvement of the practicum material from his position as school practicum tutor and “teacher leader”. From this moment on, the supervising teacher at the university and the tutor teacher at the school worked in collaboration to prepare the latest version of the practicum material published in 2021 (Moral-Santaella & Sánchez-Lamolda, 2021).

At the end of the practicum period, the supervising teachers (trained and untrained groups) administered a visual image recognition test to the preservice teachers. This data collected on paper was transferred to a Word document. Once the visual test was completed, semi-structured group interviews were conducted with the students in the trained and untrained groups by the supervising teachers of the practicum groups to assess the future teachers’ views on the practicum period (King et al., 2019a). In the years before the COVID pandemic, the tests were given directly in class. In the case of the data obtained in the 2020–2021 academic year, it was collected through the Internet and compiled into Word documents by the preservice teachers. The interviews were conducted by the practicum supervising university teachers of the trained and untrained preservice teacher groups. This year, due to the COVID pandemic, interviews with the tutor teachers were conducted through ZOOM.

In relation to the analysis carried out on the data obtained from the visual tests, a series of verbal protocols were obtained for each of the five projected images. The

verbal protocols were analyzed using the linguistic analysis provided by the LIWC analysis program (Kim et al., 2011; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). This program performs a linguistic and grammatical analysis on verbal protocols and is used as a measure of the degree of conceptual elaboration of expert and novice professionals based on the following categories of analysis: number of words, number of words per sentence, scientific/non-scientific vocabulary, number of words with more than six letters, and appearance of words associated with complex cognitive processes (cause, expectation, possibility, doubt, suggestion, inference, inclusion, comparison, discrepancy, effect, contrast, opinion, etc.) The data obtained from the interviews with the tutor teachers of the trained group, as well as the group interviews of the trained and untrained groups, was analyzed by applying a basic content analysis methodology (Neuendorf, 2017).

Results

In relation to the results of the visual test, it is verified that, during the years of research (2018–2021), the preservice teachers belonging to the trained group give responses that could be considered more expert and competent than those of the untrained group. The answers given by the trained group show greater linguistic and grammatical complexity, the use of more complex words and techniques, and more elaborate grammatical constructions associated with complex cognitive processes. All this is symbolic of a more elaborate knowledge structure to address the understanding of the teaching-learning processes, typical of expert or highly trained professionals (Chi et al., 1988; Kim et al., 2011; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

Figure 9.1 shows the main differences found when applying the LIWC program for the trained and untrained groups and, specifically, the tendency of each group for each category of the analysis is expressed as a proportion of the total data. The columns show the differences in the appearance of each category for each of the groups studied. The larger the column size, the more significant the difference between the frequencies of the trained group and the untrained group. The tendency is higher in the trained group in the categories for the number of words, number of words per sentence, number of words with more than 6 letters, and number of words related to cognitive processes such as insight, causal relationships, discrepancy, possibility, or certainty. On the contrary, the higher tendency in the untrained group is shown in the category for the number of words of non-scientific or technical use.

In relation to the results of the interviews, it must be noted that preservice teachers, both in the trained group and in the untrained group, were very satisfied with having completed the practicum period. They considered it to be the best time in their training as teachers, giving little value to the period of theoretical training received at university. According to the trained group, the guide they followed to produce the practice report was much more complex and difficult than that of the rest of their classmates. However, although preservice teachers of the trained group made these comments, they recognized that they were satisfied with the material

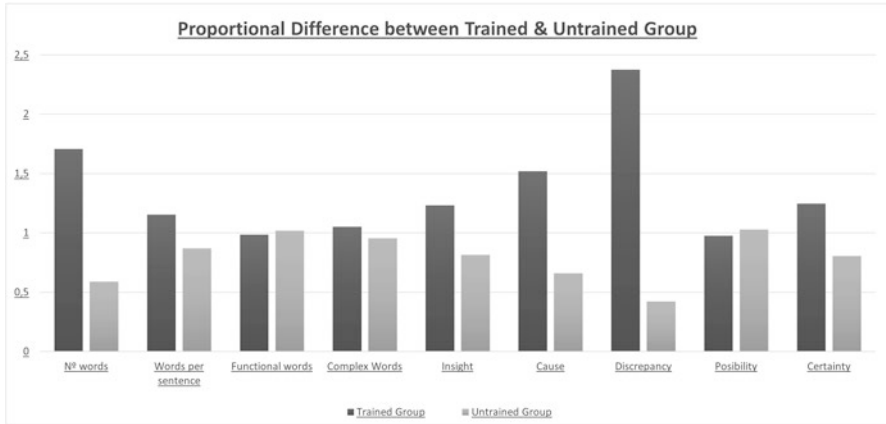


Fig. 9.1 Differences found when applying the LIWC program for the trained and untrained groups *Note.* Results of the analysis carried out on the visual test data applying the LIWC program. Differences in response between the training and untrained groups in relation to the analysis categories of the LIWC program: number of words, words per sentence, functional words, complex words, cognitive processes such as insight, cause, discrepancy, possibility, and certainty

used and the reflection that it generated since it allowed them to better understand the complexities of teaching and a great diversity of aspects that would otherwise have gone unnoticed during their practicum period. In addition, they considered that, based on these materials, they overcame the descriptive practices that are associated with the production of the practice report and diary carried out by their colleagues at the university.

The school tutors of the trained group were surprised by the close relationship established with the university through the new guided reflection material. They had never had direct contact with the university supervisors and neither had they had a detailed orientation guide on what the preservice teachers had to observe, do, or analyze, with the ultimate goal of training teacher leaders. Therefore, although some tutors were reluctant and offered some resistance towards the use of the guided reflection materials on teaching competences, which are much more complex than the materials offered by the Faculty of Education of Granada to guide the production of the practice report (Pérez-García et al., 2013), a very high percentage of tutor teachers (70%) appreciated and valued the new practicum material because they considered that it clarified what students should observe and do during the practicum period, allows them to organize their performance, as well as to guide the observation and reflection of preservice teachers. It also broadens their vision toward something unknown to them until now, which is the figure of the teacher leader. Some school tutor teachers confirm that it has served them as an instrument of professional development. Others indicate that they would have liked to have such material at the time of their practicum, as it would have helped them to get more out of their training period. In any case, they considered that they need more information, more time, and more detail to deal with a variety of complex aspects

developed in the practicum material, such as those related to effective leadership from a teacher leader's perspective. These latter concepts are totally new to them, and they needed more time to understand them.

It could be said that although some tutors saw themselves reflected in this figure of teacher leader and the practicum materials corresponded and reflected their approach, others did not fully understand them and are overwhelmed. Some even reject them outright. Thus, several types of tutor-mentor teachers found in this study were discovered according to the reaction caused by the new practicum material in which the teacher is not only considered a technician or a professional, but also a leader:

- Those who rejected it outright, considering it out of place and an attack on class dynamics as it instigates and questions their traditional way of proceeding. It shows a figure of a teacher leader that does not fit into their usual approach and structure of action.
- Those who accepted it as a guiding instrument for the practicum but did not fully understand it. It was taken as a reference, but it was not given a particular meaning or used as a tool for improvement. This type of tutor was not able to understand the implications of the figure of the teacher leader.
- Those who valued it and used it as a tool for professional development. These school tutors were concerned about improvement. When they received this practicum material, they accepted it as an instrument for analyzing their own practice. The new material served as a stimulus to suggest new proposals for action and as a guide to direct reflection with preservice teachers in training.

Finally, referring to the difficulties and resistance to the implementation of this action-research study, they come not only from future teachers dissatisfied with an overload of work and a practicum program that they considered more demanding than the one carried out in the Faculty of Education of Granada, or from those school tutors who did not wish to participate, but also from the university institution itself that does not wish to modify its traditional performance routines. Although this training proposal from a teacher leader's perspective has been on trial since 2018, it is not recognized as a proposal for the improvement of the practicum model. The traditional practicum model is maintained, although it is not as effective as the one shown in this work for the training of future teacher leaders.

Discussion and Conclusions

These results of the action-research study lead us to consider the idea of training more prepared preservice teachers from the perspective of teacher leaders, but they also lead to a reflection on the figure of the tutor-mentor teacher considered as a teacher leader.

In relation to the figure of the preservice teacher as a teacher leader, the results presented in this text verify the starting hypothesis of this research, which is being

tested in the Faculty of Education of Granada. Preservice teachers who follow this new training model give more professional, expert, or competent responses, associated with a “teacher leader” capable of capturing the complexity of teaching, than those who do not use it (Kim et al., 2011; Woff et al., 2017).

In relation to the tutors considered as teacher leaders, three types of leaders have been found to be involved in this new model of teacher education, following the classification by Harris (2003): tutor teachers who see it as “heresy” to use a practicum model different from the traditional one; tutor teachers who consider it a “fantasy” to train preservice teachers to be teacher leaders; tutor teachers who see the training of preservice teachers as teacher leaders as a “possibility”, because they consider it necessary and they identify themselves with this figure of a teacher leader. For this last type of school tutor teachers, the new practicum model, together with the new material for guided reflection on teaching competences, helps them in their professional development and allows them to organize and design, to some extent, their performance as tutors of preservice teachers.

Therefore, this study concludes that the new model that is being tested through this action-research study can be a valid alternative to counteract the problems associated with the practicum period for teacher education in Spain. The use of guided reflection material to introduce preservice teachers to the competencies that lead to the formation of future teacher leaders is effective in achieving more competent professionals, experts, and leaders. Furthermore, the guided reflection material on teaching competencies for the training of teacher leaders facilitated curricular coherence in the practicum program for teacher education, avoiding the problems of theory–practice disconnection, the apprenticeship of observation, and the lack of coordination between school and university, since the practicum model establishes a close link between theory and practice in order to overcome the unreflective observation of teaching practices that:

- Is based on reflecting on teaching competencies for the training of teacher leaders. It facilitates a guided reflection on each component of each competency at technical, practical, and critical reflexive levels.
- Shows an image of complex teaching related to having achieved a diversity of teaching and leading competencies, and not an image of easy teaching associated with the attainment of easy-to-follow routines.
- Allows for the use of an evaluation system or rubric with more specific criteria and in accordance with the assessment of a teacher leader.
- Draws attention to the verification by preservice teachers of how the different competencies are carried out in particular school contexts.
- Prevents preservice teachers from relying exclusively on their personal belief system and the dominant professional cultures observed during their practicum period to build the image of teaching and the teacher as a mere technician.
- Allows the tutors/supervisors to have a detailed guide of the observation process that preservice teachers will carry out during the practicum period, which allows them to organize and systematize their tasks of helping, guiding, modeling, or supervising preservice teachers.

Undoubtedly, an expert teacher leader is demonstrated by more than just the linguistic analysis applied in this work (Kim et al., 2011; Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010), and there are other instruments, procedures, activities, etc., for the training of teacher leaders in addition to the use of the new guided reflection materials tested in this work. However, the really important implication of this work lies in demonstrating that the usage of this new practicum model, supported by this type of reflective material, gives coherence to the curricular model that supports the practicum program. This new material makes it possible to meet the objectives set out in the practicum program and shows that preservice teachers who use it produce a more elaborate and complex response, symbolic of more expert or competent thinking. Therefore, although to some extent its usage produces certain resistance both in the students and the school tutor teachers, and even in members of the university institution who have doubts about its possible application and are uncomfortable modifying accommodating and easy routines, the new practicum model and its guided reflection materials are effective tools for training teacher leaders.

The disconnection between university and school, a permanent problem in teacher training, is overcome in this work, perhaps in a “third space” referred to by Zeichner (2010), but clearly in a space in which a learning community is built between the members of the school and the university for the co-construction of the practicum program. The joint development of the material that guides the reflection of preservice teachers carried out by the tutor teacher at the school and the supervising teacher at the university is an example of this “third space” (Moral-Santaella & Sánchez-Lamolda, 2021). However, to achieve the school–university connection, the university must show a disposition for the improvement of schools and contribute its knowledge to improving the quality of education in the Spanish education system. The university must stop resisting change, which means abandoning the university teaching ego and its policy for professional advancement (Herrán-Gascón & González-Sánchez, 2002).

Spain’s educational results are stagnant and falling behind, as Marina et al. (2015) observed, compared to other countries in the world. Our teacher education system is also stuck in a traditional and academic training model (Moral-Santaella, 2021). If Spain really tries to prepare teachers for the demands of the twenty-first century (Manso & Garrido-Martos, 2021; REDE, 2019) and revalue and give prestige to the teaching profession (Tiana, 2011a), then the figure of the teacher leader and their training possibilities must be considered. The need to modernize the teaching profession in Spain, as Gratacós et al. (2021) pointed out, together with the “modernization of the Spanish teacher education model” (Gratacós et al., 2021, p. 268), is a conclusion that can be deduced from this research.

Therefore, based on this work, it can be concluded that it would not be sufficient to envision the teacher of the future from the deontological code (Tiana, 2011b) and the teaching functions of the new education law (BOE, 2020), not even from the latest research that tells us about the good teacher associated with the image of a professional with a “good heart” or “pedagogical love” (Alonso-Sáinz, 2021, pp. 184–185). It is also necessary that the future teacher is prepared as a teacher leader and that preservice teachers find teacher leaders to guide the practicum

program. Tutors or mentors who support future teachers during their practicum cannot be mere animators or collaborators in an observational learning process, but also true tutor-mentor teacher leaders. These tutors should not consider the practicum focused on the training of teacher leaders as heresy or fantasy, but as a possibility for change and improvement. According to Manso and Garrido-Martos (2021) from the LOMLOE (BOE, 2020), there is a provision that makes it compulsory by law to regulate the initial training of teachers. Therefore, this work serves as a basis and orientation for the next regulation of initial teacher training in Spain, bearing in mind the figure of the teacher leader as the true agent of change and school improvement.

Appendix: Examples of Guided Reflection Activities

Metacognitive Processes Developed in Class

Awareness of the learning process is an essential condition for achieving personalized teaching and meaningful learning. Students must become aware of why they learn, what they learn for, how they learn, how useful what they are learning will be, what are the problems involved in the learning process, how to solve them, etc. It is interesting to reflect on the moments in class when students' metacognitive processes are activated based on the following diagram:

| Observe when the following questions are raised in class | When is it used? | Procedure |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Why am I learning this subject? | | |
| How useful is this subject to me? | | |
| How useful is what I learn to others? | | |
| Which difficulties are involved in learning this subject? | | |
| How can I overcome these difficulties? | | |
| How do I learn in a correct manner? | | |
| How do I feel when I learn this subject? | | |
| Other questions | | |

- Are any of these questions raised in class?
- If they are not used, why do you think they are not used?
- In which subjects or moments of class are these metacognitive questions raised?
- To what degree do students participate? Do they all participate or only some? Who is participating? With what results?
- Do you think students are interested in participating by questioning these processes?

- Do you notice any changes in the students after applying these metacognitive processes?
- What implications do you think are associated with working with these metacognitive processes in class?
- Do you think that developing these metacognitive processes in class is necessary or could they be suppressed?

The Teacher Researcher

As has just been indicated, today's school approaches change and improvement from the strength of leadership and from the reflection processes generated within professional learning communities. But at the heart of these communities of shared reflection is research into possible ways of achieving improvement. The figure of the teacher researcher, who carries out a systematic investigation of his/her own practice, is the basis for the school improvement processes. A teacher researcher, leader of improvement and change, engages in action-research processes used as the basic or central tool for the transformation of the school and the improvement of teaching.

It would be convenient to analyze to what extent the teacher performs this research function on his/her own practice by carrying out action-research proposals. The following observation script can be used for this purpose:

| Research conducted by the school teacher/mentor | Yes | No |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| It is systematic and is carried out through an orderly process of gathering and collecting information, documented experiences inside and outside the classroom. | | |
| It is intentional, being a planned activity with the idea of deliberately learning and improving from the research results. | | |
| It is social and constructive since it is not considered an individual activity but a collective one, involving all teachers who are interested in contributing to the research. | | |
| It focuses on practice and the immediate day-to-day problems in their classrooms. | | |
| It is risky because it is not merely exposing the possible changes or exploring possibilities of transformation, but rather involves a real transformation of the situation, which is always associated with a certain level of risk. | | |
| It is collaborative since collaboration is necessary to reach an ultimate common vision and understanding that allows for real improvement and change, not just for a few. | | |
| It is profound, trying to connect with the characteristic thoughts and beliefs of teachers. | | |
| It is proposed as a reflexive critique, promoting the issuing of a personal/collective judgment in order to make decisions that allow progress and improvement. | | |
| It aims to generalize the results obtained to the whole school. | | |
| It requires a teacher willing to devote time to improvement. Lack of time is a constant complaint of teachers and is considered a major cause determining the extent to which action-research proposals are or are not successfully carried out. | | |
| Others... | | |

Once these aspects have been observed, interview the teacher/mentor at the school and collect his/her opinion on the extent to which there are favorable conditions in the school to be able to develop action-research proposals:

- What are the elements that encourage or inhibit the development of research-action proposals at school?
- How to improve the conditions for greater involvement of teachers in action-research proposals?
- Make a comment based on the data collected (observation and interview). What possibilities or difficulties does the figure of the “teacher researcher” entail?

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Chapter 10

Teacher Leadership and School Improvement in Argentina: Why Is It Difficult... Why Is It Urgent?



Pedro León Vivas and Gloria Gratacós 

Abstract The results achieved by the educational system of Argentina invite us to inquire about different paths for improvement, especially in times characterized by increasing levels of complexity and uncertainty. Our approach takes the school as the unit of analysis and a valid alternative from which to promote sustainable improvement processes. We are interested in considering the possibilities of distributed forms of leadership in promoting and sustaining school improvement capacity. However, if we look at the current organization of secondary schools in Argentina, it presents a configuration that constrains the possibilities for sustainable improvements. The *taxi teacher* phenomenon disperses energies and limits collaboration between teachers and commitment to schools. In addition, the role and functions of formal leaders leave a little margin to promote the conditions required to develop teacher leadership. In this chapter, we reflect on the potential offered by distributed forms of leadership as scaffolding for improvements in the secondary school in Argentina. On the other hand, we warn about the limitations of the current organizational configuration that restrict their possibilities. Finally, we propose some recommendations and alternatives for action that advocate for an urgent change of paradigm in the organization of teachers and principals in Argentina.

Keywords Distributed leadership · Teacher leadership · School improvement capacity · Secondary school · Argentina

This report is based on research done as part of the *International Study of Teacher Leadership* conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey, and more latterly Morocco and Argentina. The multi-stage study commenced in 2018. For more information, see the study website: www.mru.ca/istl.

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Introduction

We live in times when the pace of change accelerates vertiginously. Technological, economic, socio-cultural, political, and demographic changes are transforming the world we know. These changes will probably not stop; on the contrary, as COVID-19 has reminded us, our reality shows that they will accelerate to an increasing rate, compelling both individuals and organizations to develop new capacities so that they can adjust more rapidly.

Education is the key to assure an economic progress in all countries and to ensure inclusion in our societies (UNESCO, 2014). Rivas (2015) stated that since 2000, one of the priorities in Latin American countries has been to fight against poverty and the educational gap through educational policies. In Argentina, the educational law of 2006 introduced compulsory attendance to school until the completion of secondary studies for all students to promote education and avoid social exclusion. Although secondary-level access is moving toward universality, the system is incapable of sustaining high school students' educational trajectory, which includes frequent school-year repetitions, high dropout rates (especially in the first years), and low attainment (Tiramonti, 2019). A great number of students do not complete secondary school. Only 54% complete the level, and 29% at the expected age (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2020). In addition, significant differences are observed among jurisdictions in the country (Guadagni & Boero, 2015). Moreover, if we add the results obtained by Argentine students in both national and international tests, we observe a level that presents serious problems and challenges for improvement in the future.

Murillo (2003) defined improvement as “the school’s ability to simultaneously increase students’ learning and the development of the school community” (p. 3). This proposal suggests that change should be centered on the teaching process, the curriculum, and the development of initiatives for its improvement. This involves every member of the school staff, focuses on building a learning community that includes the entire school organization, and promotes teachers’ continuous development with the information collected from the school’s data as well as the research literature (Murillo, 2003).

Research agrees on the importance of educational leadership to improve learnings in schools (Day et al., 2009; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006; Murillo, 2007). The school as the unit of analysis can help us to investigate how leadership can expand across teachers in schools to affect the conditions for teaching and learning (Bolívar & Murillo, 2017; Spillane et al., 2001; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). We are interested in considering the possibilities offered by distributed forms of leadership and teacher leadership in promoting and sustaining improvements in secondary education in Argentina by strengthening professional learning (human capital) and developing a culture of collaboration (social capital) (Fullan, 2004; Hargreaves & Fink, 2008; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014; Krichesky & Murillo, 2018). Moreover, it is important to know how school contexts may influence leadership practices, having in mind that school contexts are also influenced by culture,

institutional structures, and legislation. Institutional structures shape the role definition and behavior of principals (Lee & Hallinger, 2012) and establish a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities in schools (Hallinger, 2018).

The purpose of this article is to analyze what type of leadership is required to implement the improvements that schools need so they can adjust to a scenario of rapid changes and poor educational outcomes and also search for the organizational conditions that can sustain it. Specifically, this work will be contextualized considering the present situation of secondary schools in Argentina, with the aim of providing educational policymakers with suggestions that may contribute to rethinking several aspects of secondary education level and offering resources and guidelines to carry out those improvements.

We start with the theoretical framework on school improvement and school leadership, focusing on the contribution that teacher leadership can provide. Then, we focus on the Argentinian educational context to describe the main features of their educational system. Finally, we discuss what type of leadership is required and the conditions needed to implement it in secondary schools in Argentina.

Theoretical Framework

In a review of the literature on school change and improvement, Slegers and Leithwood (2010) identified two major lines of research. The first one focused on the school capacity to become an environment that encourages learning and change. The authors coined the term “inside view,” which refers to a viewpoint linked to organizational learning and to the development of professional learning communities. From this perspective, school members are involved in individual and collective processes of continuous reflection about their beliefs, practices, and achieved results. They engage in the exchange of ideas as well as the generation and distribution of knowledge and seek to improve the performance of every school member and of the whole organization. The second line, the “outside view,” refers to the implementation of externally developed reforms. This trend promotes change based on excellent practices designed by those responsible for implementing educational policies, which are considered appropriate for school improvement and student learning. In this approach, teachers become rational actors who apply these good practices, acting as their receivers and consumers.

However, an external change proposal that overlooks the particularities and distinctive features of each school will hardly contribute to generating and consolidating deep changes and sustainability (Hallinger, 2018). Therefore, the “outside view” understood as the changes proposed by the administration or specialists outside the school is not sufficient if not accompanied by the “inside view” perspective, which emphasizes the role of school members’ agency. Definitely, both perspectives are complementary, but if the internal one is not enhanced, only the external one will not be enough. In fact, school improvement capacity nurtures the “inside view.”

The Role of Leadership in Building School Improvement Capacity

School improvement is an opportunity for schools to become reflexive organizations that regard their own learning as a means to respond to continuous changes in their environment. This requires developing school improvement capacity, which involves building a deliberate set of coherent strategies based on research and related to the local context. These strategies should have an influence over every school member's knowledge, abilities, and priorities so that they can implement changes focused on student learning improvement (Bain et al., 2011).

Thoonen et al. (2011, 2012) suggested that the following four dimensions build school improvement capacity: (1) *Transformational leadership* aims at defining a challenging vision for schools that favors internal cohesion and a sense of belonging, stimulates personal support to school collaborators, and motivates teachers to question their beliefs and practices; (2) *Organizational conditions* include teacher cooperation in an environment where they can exchange ideas and experiences, and participation in decision-making processes that favor the internalization of the school's objectives, increasing involvement in the educational project and providing a climate of trust among teachers; (3) *Teacher motivation* concerns expectations that teachers have the necessary abilities to perform a task, understand the importance attributed to the task (the value component), and react emotionally to the task and to the school as a whole (affective component); and (4) *Teacher learning* focuses on teacher commitment to participate in continuous professional learning activities organized by the school.

Moral et al. (2016) stated that capacity is a school-wide collective competence consisting of the following elements: (1) identification of a shared vision and direction; (2) development of human capital by improving knowledge and skills; (3) development of social capital by building a strong professional community based on collaboration; (4) development of a coordinated curricular program; and (5) structural conditions, such as time and resources.

The approaches for developing school improvement capacity presented so far support the idea that shared vision and values, continuous education and teacher collaboration, organizational conditions and supporting resources, and leadership practices constitute dimensions that should be considered when capacities for learning and change are built. However, in a school engaged in building its capacities, these dimensions cannot be regarded in isolation. They should be developed systematically as a complex and integrated unit with multiple interrelationships (Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Senge, 2015). For example, offering training about the latest available teaching strategy, which may not relate to the school goals and values, and without ensuring the appropriate organizational conditions for their future implementation, will not help achieve its potential and will only cause teacher demotivation and frustration.

According to Sales et al. (2017), increasing change capacity requires new ways of understanding and exercising leadership, a more sophisticated one that deals with

an increasingly complex society. Moral et al. (2016) pointed out that “leadership is the critical variable that generates school improvement capacity” (p. 118). A similar conclusion was reached by Thoonen et al. (2012) when they stated that leadership practice improvement constitutes a prerequisite for building capacities. Leaders create the contexts and facilitate the emergence of a common direction and shared purpose. They also organize time, space, and resources needed to reflect upon practices and outcomes, and they promote continuous teacher training centered on school needs and challenges.

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), “leaders mobilize and work with others to achieve shared goals” (p. 3). At the core of this definition, there are two functions—providing direction and exercising influence. These ideas imply that leaders do not intend to impose a direction, but rather, they work with others to create a shared sense of purpose that functions as a binding element and as a compass for school members. Leadership also helps establish conditions that enable others to improve their competencies and results.

Leadership directly or indirectly affects school outcomes. In a review of various research lines about leadership and its impact, Leithwood et al. (2006) reached the following conclusion:

Our conclusion from this evidence, as a whole, is that leadership has very significant effects on the quality of the school organization and on pupil learning. As far as we are aware, there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership. One explanation for this is that leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organization. (pp. 14–15)

The diverse tasks performed at schools need to be systemically approached and consistently articulated. Thus, school leaders define goals and communicate them to the educational community, plan and supervise teachers’ work, make efforts to improve teaching and learning, introduce curricular and didactic innovations, promote teaching team collaboration and reflection, collect and analyze the results reached, operate as site representatives and spokespeople, maintain a fluent communication with students’ families, link the school with other relevant organizations, define resource distribution methods, implement guidelines for educational policies, and report to the relevant authorities (Pont et al., 2008).

Therefore, this configures a leadership whose responsibilities involve complex, challenging tasks, which simultaneously require the use of multiple competencies. The image of the principal leading alone the school, *heroic leadership*, must give way to a new notion, a concept by which the leadership articulates numerous complex tasks, capitalizes on the competencies and knowledge distributed among every school member, principals and teachers included, and makes them available to improve the school, the school’s teaching approach, and its students’ learning quality (Harris, 2012; Spillane, 2006; Yukl, 1999). Distributed leadership is a valid perspective from which we can understand school leadership because this conception provides better conditions to develop improvement capacity and learning in schools.

Teacher Leadership as a Form of Distributed Leadership to Support School Improvement Capacity

Distributed leadership is understood as a distributed function, not just a role directly linked to a position of formal authority (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), which involves principals and teachers and formal and informal leaders (Harris, 2004; Spillane, 2006). Research in this field can provide clues for the type of leadership we are searching for by extending its influence to include formal as well as informal leaders, i.e., leaders with or without authority positions. Although the concept of distributed leadership is not new, this approach has not yet permeated the culture and structure of schools, and the idea of principals as individual leaders is still fully present (Bolden, 2011; Moral et al., 2016). As Spillane (2006) stated:

Leadership refers to activities tied to the core work of the organization that are designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices of other organizational members or that are understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices. (pp. 11–12)

From this definition, we will take three elements that are particularly relevant: (1) leadership focuses on *activities tied to the core work of the organization which should be connected with teaching and learning*; (2) the activities *are designed by organizational members*. This is a core aspect of distributed leadership. It is not only the leader who, from a formal position, can design activities. Planning these activities can be extended to several school members, whether they have formal authority positions or not, and (3) leadership activities are *understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect, or practices*. Here we find the concept of influence, which is central to leadership.

Elmore (2010) pointed out that when knowledge is intensively involved, such as in teaching and learning, the only way to perform these complex activities is by broadly distributing leadership responsibilities among the various roles in an organization, working constantly to create a common culture. Moreover, a shared vision, mission, and values are required for a fruitful distribution of leadership in schools. These three elements provide cohesion to the actions of every school member under certain common premises, which would operate as the “glue” or binder for maintaining a united membership. Consequently, each school member would give meaning to their everyday tasks through their contributions to the school purposes.

Additionally, the development of distributed leadership requires a particular understanding of school organization. The school as a bureaucratic organization, designed in accordance with industrial models, should give way to a more organic, open-to-learning organization, with a predominance of collegial collaboration and continuous reflection about practices (Harris, 2012; Pont et al., 2008). Due to its nature and characteristics, the conception of schools as *professional learning communities* becomes a powerful idea to consider if we wish to develop distributed leadership. These communities embody the most highly positive features of distributed leadership and provide the energy and capacity of the overall community to serve the interests of every student (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008).

However, a significant change of approach is required, moving away from the idea that it is the principal at the top position who is the only individual who conducts and makes decisions, toward the conception of leadership that recognizes that the capacity to influence others is potentially found in every school member. This can only be done if leaders provide the means and enable conditions for that potential capacity to take shape. This implies that “for many principals a personal transformation in leadership needs to occur so that the efforts to nurture the growth of other leaders can succeed” (Harris, 2012, p. 8). It is not suggested here that the principal no longer establishes the strategic direction of the school. From the distributed leadership perspective, principals’ main responsibilities include the promotion of cultural and organizational conditions so this potential availability can be channeled into better teaching practices and student learning and the organization of talents and leadership capacity available in others (Harris, 2012).

Teacher leadership has become “an increasingly popular topic among educational policymakers and influential educational organizations as an important component of school reform” (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 135). It emerges from distributed leadership and is manifested at the teacher level, where teachers become leaders for their class, their colleagues, and their school, and turn their objectives toward promoting improvement in pedagogical practices and student learning (Harris, 2014; Levin & Schrum, 2017).

“Teacher leadership is defined as collaborative involvement, initiative, and guiding direction from the teaching faculty to help realize the school goals, mission, and vision in a reflective manner” (Sterrett, 2015, p. 43). It is based on the idea that every teacher can be a leader in various formal and informal ways as a manifestation of distributed leadership (Levin & Schrum, 2017). Harris (2017) explained that teacher leadership includes school–district curricular work, colleagues’ professional training, participation in school improvement, influence on parents and the community, action research, and promotion of social justice. Therefore, focusing on teacher leadership can be an opportunity to facilitate teacher participation, improve the professional work environment, promote schools’ growth, and provide benefits for the students (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

When analyzing systematic reviews on teacher leadership, we observe that this concept has long been discussed and often related to other leadership ideas, such as participative leadership, distributed leadership, and parallel leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Although these theories already include the potential leadership capacity of principals (formal leadership functions) and teachers (informal leadership functions) in a school, teacher leadership mainly focuses on the pedagogical (instructional) and teacher collaboration aspects for student learning improvement. From the teachers’ perspective, teacher leadership differs from previous leadership theories in that it is the practical consequence of those theories, which involves both the classroom and the school contexts, and emphasizes the importance of informal leadership oriented toward school improvement.

Both distributed and teacher leadership establish the basis for the development of a number of processes that lead to improvement (see Fig. 10.1). In fact, the knowledge available in teacher teams can be fruitfully managed by the circulation of a

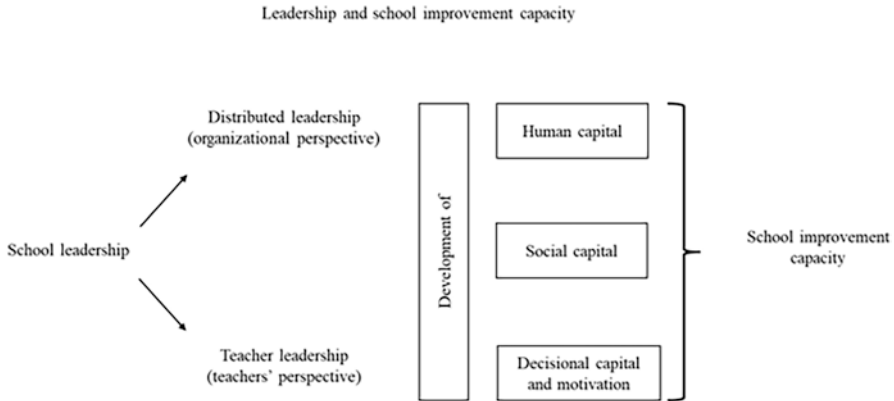


Fig. 10.1 Leadership and school improvement capacity. (Source: By authors based on the concept of professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014))

repertoire of pedagogical practices, and the generation of new experiences that strengthen teachers' human capital and professionalism in a spiral process of positive feedback (Elmore, 2010). Therefore, schools are configured as propitious places for learning and professional development (Bolívar & Murillo, 2017). Another process involves strengthening the social capital by enabling the development of numerous collaboration practices, such as work coordination, joint development of activities and resources, and collaborative problem-solving processes. Collaboration is also connected to a good environment and work atmosphere in which the teaching practice is performed (Krichesky & Murillo, 2018). Teacher teams with a developed social network, ample reliability, and trust usually learn more and work better (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014). Furthermore, "evidence reveals that when teachers take collective responsibility for pedagogical development and implementation, and principals place that role at the centre of school management and leadership, a mutualistic relationship between teacher leadership and the principal evolves" (Conway, 2015, p. 30).

According to Fullan (2004), collaborative cultures perform two functions that are closely related to improvement. On the one hand, they promote a certain degree of difference: collaboration will be effective and valuable in addressing complex problems when there are diverse ideas to foster creative mixtures. Collaborative cultures "value diversity because that is how they get different perspectives" (p. 53). On the other hand, collaborative cultures also offer support and propitious environments with capacity to become *containment nets* that help reduce the anxiety produced by change. Moreover, teachers are able to participate in decision-making processes related to the configuration and development of their own work. This participation will positively affect every teacher team member, increasing their level of motivation, shared responsibility, and commitment. Performance of teachers improves if they participate with their expertise in the configuration of the practices and processes for which they are responsible, when they work in a school in which they can develop professionally and deploy their decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014).

Since leadership is situational and highly sensitive to contextual factors (Hallinger, 2018), the present work provides a reflection over the concept of teacher leadership, which favors building improvement capacity and learning in secondary schools in Argentina. Specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions:

1. Which leadership approach would favor capacity building in order to promote and sustain profound improvement in secondary schools in Argentina?
2. Which conditions could favor the development of this type of leadership? Are these conditions properly developed?

Context of Study

A Brief Description of Secondary Education in Argentina

Argentina has a population of approximately 47.3 million inhabitants, according to the latest census carried out in 2022, and is divided into 24 jurisdictions (23 provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires). Education in Argentina is federal, and both the national government and the jurisdictions share responsibilities for planning, organizing, supervising, and financing the education system. This means that each jurisdiction can establish its own education laws based on national guidelines.

The structure and organization of the education system in Argentina is laid down by the National Education Law no. 26206, issued in 2006. This law states that education is a national priority and a state policy, establishing a unified structure based on four levels: initial education, primary education, secondary education, and higher education. Moreover, this law has allowed the national state and the jurisdictions to authorize privately funded confessional and non-confessional schools (the most numerous ones), cooperatively managed schools, and socially managed schools.¹ Some of these institutions are funded by the state. The state education sector serves approximately 70% of compulsory education students.

As shown above, beyond the expansion of secondary education (although it is an achievement), the results are insufficient (Tobefía & Nobile, 2021). Secondary school is the institution that is facing the most serious crisis in the system because, although the age range for compulsory school attendance has increased, it is difficult to retain students in the system for secondary-level completion. Consequently, access to secondary school translates into failure for many students.

¹Confessional schools are a type of school that manifests their connection and adherence to a particular religion. Cooperatively managed and socially managed schools belong to the teachers, workers, or civil society organizations (such as foundations). In these schools, the management is collegial, based on cooperative principles, and with a strong bond with the social and cultural context and its needs.

Performance of Argentine Students in PISA 2018

The scores reached by Argentine students in relation to students from other education systems show that Argentina has a quite discouraging performance and ranks among the lower performance systems.

We find that throughout the years, Argentine PISA scores only show improvement in science (with a performance similar to that of other Latin American countries). In the other two areas, reading and mathematics, the scores have declined and are below the average score for Latin American countries. In the reading and science areas, more than 50% of Argentine students are on the lower performance levels. In mathematics, 69% of students also reached the same low level. On the other hand, the higher performance levels were reached by only 0.7% of students in the reading tests, 0.3% in the mathematics tests, and 0.5% in the science tests. In other words, less than 1% of Argentine students have reached higher performance levels in the areas assessed by PISA 2018.

This brief look over PISA's key outcomes for the Argentine education system offers a prompt diagnosis of its status and shows the need to plan urgent alternatives for improvement. Although there is certain criticism regarding the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) limitations, the outcomes and the information provided by PISA should not be discarded (Narodowski, 2018).

As a synthesis, Ganimian (2019) shows the main findings drawn from the analysis of the results reached by Argentina in the PISA 2018 tests. Here we mention some of them:

- Argentina is one the lowest performing countries of all the participating education systems.
- Argentina's performance has not improved for almost two decades.
- A significantly high percentage of Argentine students are unable to reach the minimum learning levels in the areas assessed, showing incipient, weak learning, and difficulties in understanding future situations, both at school and in other fields.
- The percentage of low-performance students remains stagnant, whereas some of the Latin American countries have been able to reduce it.
- Less than 1% of Argentine students managed to reach levels of excellence.
- The percentage of high-performance students has not increased.

Argentina's Performance in National Tests

Argentina also has national standardized assessments conducted by the National Ministry of Education in the 24 jurisdictions of the country. These tests involve the areas of language, mathematics, social sciences, and natural sciences.

Results from the 2016 to 2019 editions of the national tests show that in mathematics, around 70% of students in their last year in secondary school are at or below the basic level, unable to have satisfactory performance. In contrast with those

results, improvements in language are observed, and a greater number of students reached satisfactory and advanced levels. However, in the 2019 assessment, 38% of students still had difficulty finding, understanding, and reflecting on information from relatively complex texts (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2020). This situation becomes a major concern considering the fact that these young people are about to start their higher education or enter the labor market. In the social sciences and natural sciences areas, approximately 60% of students achieve advanced or satisfactory results.

These results hide significant inequalities in the Argentine education system. There are big gaps between the highest and the lowest performance jurisdictions ranking (Buchbinder et al., 2019; Cortelezzi & Bonahora, 2017). Another alarming imbalance is observed in relation to school management types: in every area assessed private schools had better performances than state schools (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2018, 2020). Finally, social inequalities are also found when the socioeconomic profile is observed. In every area assessed and with significant differences, students with a high socioeconomic status were at higher performance levels than students with a lower socioeconomic status (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2018, 2020).

It should be noted that the outcomes shown here reflect the performance of students who actually managed to complete secondary education; they were the students who persisted and completed their compulsory school trajectory. It is sad to say that many others had dropped out of high school earlier.

Organizational Structures and Culture in the Argentinian Educational System

Students' outcomes shown in the previous section are not the consequence of an accident or bad luck but, rather, they are the results of a dysfunctional educational ecosystem. We point out two of them: teacher's work organization and the role of principals at the secondary level in Argentina, two main factors in the school improvement and leadership agenda.

First, teachers do not have a full-time position at school, as is the case in other countries, because teacher contracts in this country are based on a per-hour basis, so the unit applied is the number of classroom-hours per academic subject that teachers have weekly. Thus, the school teaching staff arrangement reflects the hour load of the curricular design.² This type of organization interferes with teachers' opportunities to carry out other institutional tasks, which are not the ones directly linked to teaching (Terigi, 2008).

²Although some provincial states had introduced changes in recent years, they are still limited (Steinberg et al., 2019).

Another consequence of this is the fact that teachers need to accumulate classroom-hours so that they can earn a decent salary, and these hourly positions cannot usually be held in only one school. Then, teachers' work is dispersed because they need to get a reasonable number of hourly positions until they cover a complete work schedule as in a full-time job but, instead of doing this in only one site, their work is distributed among several schools. This is popularly known as the *taxi teacher* phenomenon (Tobeña & Nobile, 2021), teachers with multiple employment who move from one school to another and who, by doing this, are unable to put down institutional roots and commit to or belong in a school project (Mezzadra & Velea, 2014).

The report "Characteristics and Voices of Teachers" (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2017), based on the Aprender 2016 assessment, collects data from questionnaires completed by 52,000 teachers in primary and secondary schools. This report shows that in the last year of the secondary level only 25% of teachers work in only one institution, 30% of teachers work in two institutions and 44% in at least three. These results vary between private and state sites, as data analysis shows that 48% of state schoolteachers work in 3 or more schools, but this is reduced to 33% for private school teachers.

Which are the effects that the existing types of contracts and current regulations have on secondary school teachers in Argentina? Aguerrondo et al. (2016) concluded that this hiring method encourages individualistic teaching careers and "has increased the individual interests of those who teach to the detriment of students' needs and of the whole education system" (p. 42). Teachers are more the sum of individualities rather than a consolidated team.

Conception and Configuration of School Principals' Work

Another dimension that should not be disregarded is connected to the role of school principals since the evidence shows that they play a key role in developing improvement processes (Leithwood et al., 2004, 2006). In Argentina, however, we observe that the functions of school principals are closer to those of bureaucratic administrators than to those of leaders who promote organizational learning processes (Pont et al., 2008).

To briefly describe the activities that school principals carry out in Argentine schools, we will analyze four aspects that can potentially affect leadership: appointment and tenure, position specificity and performance standards, management of human resources, and functions performed. We will focus on the context of public schools because they represent approximately 70% of the national educational provision.

The appointment of principals is made by means of a public examination process organized by the provincial states, and the position is held for an indefinite period. Therefore, principals can perform their functions until they retire, resign, or if they

are removed from their position for serious causes. In the private sector, principals and teachers are hired under a general labor contract law.

In a report about school principals in Argentina, Romero and Krichesky (2019) pointed out that principals' functions are not specifically defined within the regulatory framework. They are regarded as teachers who have chosen to step higher onto a managing level in the education career ladder. However, this rise is not accompanied by a specific legal frame or an appropriate salary that would suit the major responsibilities that this position involves. Moreover, there are no performance standards or reference frameworks that could stand as guidelines for school management and rigorous performance assessments. In this sense, the authors pointed out that a school principal is a key, but still invisible, actor in the Argentine education system.

In state schools, principals do not participate in teacher recruitment processes because teachers are appointed by the central administrations. The same method applies for other staff members, such as assistant principals and secretaries. At the secondary level, this issue and the *taxi teacher* issue described above show that principals have serious limitations regarding the management of human resources at their school site.

In relation to the scope of functions performed, although current regulations encourage principals' instructional activities, principals end up being absorbed by numerous time-consuming administrative tasks. Thus, the pedagogical dimension is undervalued and occupies a secondary position among school leaders' daily concerns and obligations (Veleda, 2016).

This brief analysis of the role of principals shows that they mainly focus on administrative tasks, with limitations in relation to their autonomy for managing human resources and an absence of appropriate incentives and standards that would enable performance assessment. In other words, and considering the focus of this work, school principals in Argentina are a "disfigured figure," which limits the possibilities to boost and sustain processes of continuous improvement based on the development of distributed forms of leadership.

Discussion and Implications

Considering the features of secondary education in Argentina, we believe that distributed leadership and teacher leadership offer valid perspectives from which the processes of change and improvement in Argentine secondary school can be promoted and sustained. The proposed approach places school and leadership at the core of change processes. A passive attitude of confidently expecting that reforms encouraged by administrations will provide all the answers to the educational challenges is rather naive; we would be focusing our attention outside the target by misplacing responsibilities and waiting for improvements to simply fall, prosper, and produce changes.

An important aspect to recognize is that these approaches cannot be applied without an adequate contextualization; their application requires a knowledge of the organizational structures and cultures in the field and a conception and configuration of school principals' work. The literature we have reviewed shows that this issue should be addressed considering concrete cultural and social contexts because, for example, education in an English-speaking setting is not similar to education in a Latin American setting (Hallinger, 2018). A coherent alignment of distributed leadership and teacher leadership theories with educational policies, school organization, and teachers' work conditions is required, as well as an understanding of the relationships schools have with the educational administration and the community (Bolívar, 2011).

Thus, when we observe features of secondary schools in Argentina, we find that there are conditions that constrain leadership development. We will highlight two of these features, which, in our opinion, are basic: (a) consolidated teaching teams are undeveloped, and (b) principals are seen as administrative managers.

First, according to the current organization of teacher work, teachers' presence at the site is restricted to their academic subject classroom-hours, which provides few opportunities for teacher leadership development and reduces teachers' possibilities to influence the higher framework the school represents. Therefore, in this context, how should we develop teacher leadership? When can teachers "actually meet" and share their experiences with their colleagues? How can they deeply and regularly address their own and the school's problems? When will powerful systemic discussions about curricular aspects and teaching practice be promoted? These questions require discussion at regular, systematic meetings of a consolidated, mature, and engaged teaching team. We understand that the current teacher organization in Argentine secondary schools does not offer many opportunities for these questions to be answered, limiting possibilities for the emergence and development of sustainable teacher leadership. Terigi (2008) pointed out that this feature, together with a highly fragmented curriculum, consisting of clearly delimited curricular units, and a teacher training system per specialization that responds to the same logic constitute an organizational matrix that is difficult to change.

This organization does not even provide a setting where teachers view the school as a place for their own professional growth and improvement. On the contrary, it encourages an individual career that forces teachers to strain to accumulate classroom-hours in different schools, i.e., the *taxi teacher*, having a stronger connection with the curricular subject than with the school where they work and limiting their possibility to closely connect with their school. Consequently, they turn into "cultures of professional teachers who are more prone to individualism than to collaboration" (Coronel Llamas, 2005, p. 480).

Besides, teachers' satisfaction depends on the support of principals and their colleagues through teamwork (Martinez-Garrido, 2017). According to Aguerrondo et al. (2016), "no educational institution can be successful without the joint efforts made by its teaching team" (p. 42). They stated that a different type of contract is required for the secondary level, one that allows teachers to perform a full-time job in only one school, so that they can achieve a sense of belonging, be involved in

institutional initiatives with greater commitment, develop work teams, and discuss practices with their peers. Furthermore, several official initiatives have shown that it is necessary to promote actions for teachers to concentrate classroom-hours in one school site, and/or to create teaching jobs based on full-time rather than hourly positions at schools (Consejo Federal de Educación, Resoluciones N° 84/2009 and N° 330/2017). These initiatives are prompted by the belief that teachers would have more opportunities to do other activities beyond teaching, such as student counseling, participating in the school's institutional governance, and organizing teaching teams committed with the educational project and its institutional life, within an appropriate setting for collaborative work. In fact, if these ideas were put into action, school leaders would be strengthened and would have more opportunities to develop and consolidate work teams fully engaged in their schools (Mezzadra & Veleda, 2014).

Second, in Argentine secondary schools, principals have a limited level of autonomy to select a teaching faculty and management team. They mainly deal with administrative tasks and have little influence on pedagogical matters. In their study with principals on leadership and school climate in secondary schools in Buenos Aires, Romero and Krichesky (2018) confirmed that principals dedicate hardly any time to pedagogical duties.

In addition, they have to manage a part-time *taxi teacher* team, where its members are only dedicated to their classes. None of these components are compatible with a sustainable, distributed leadership approach. How can school improvement be sustained with low teacher stability (Conway, 2015)? And how can innovation and commitment with objectives be reinforced with a highly rotating teaching staff (Betrián & Jové, 2013)?

Since 2009, Argentinian administration has required that “Planes de Mejora Institucional” (Institutional Improvement Plans) be developed in schools to identify their problems and to plan actions to improve their students' performance. However, the lack of team coordination does not help implement the plans properly (Nobile, 2016). It is interesting to note a study done by Horn and Murillo (2016), with 2959 teachers of primary education in Chile, that teamwork and pedagogical support from the school community are key to developing teacher commitment. Similarly, Martinez-Garrido (2017)'s study on leadership and school climate in 15 Latin American countries (Argentina included) stated that teachers' satisfaction is related to principalship support, teamwork with colleagues, and the classroom climate oriented to students' learning. Being aware of these labor conditions obliges us to reflect on how the administration in this context can facilitate solutions. In line with this idea, Marfan and Pascual (2018), in their study using data from PISA 2009 for Chilean schools, suggested that “local context will affect the type of leadership that is required for a specific educational system to improve, and therefore the definition of principals' effective practices” (p. 279). They suggested that national and local authorities should establish conditions for collaborative work in school contexts such as time, space, and technical support to make possible the exchange of educational practices among teachers.

In addition, systematic research is not being carried out in relation to principals' leadership, which clearly shows that there is still much to do if we wish to consolidate the role of principals in school improvement (Romero & Krichesky, 2019). The conception of leadership in Argentina's secondary schools is not aligned with current school leadership demands, which is characterized by the complexity of the tasks performed, requiring the concurrence of many different competencies drawn from different sources. Expecting that a principal alone will cope with all these challenges, without the accompaniment of a consolidated and engaged teaching team, is simply too much (Spillane, 2006). In the search for new forms of leadership practice, teachers' participation is an essential value, and their expertise in teaching and learning could become a major asset to help principals cope with today's complex school challenges (Bernal & Ibarrola, 2015).

Therefore, teacher leadership contributes to school improvement, as it can help boost teachers' morale and professionalism as well as provide new ways of understanding the teaching profession and of restructuring schools as learning communities (Stoll et al., 2004). It can also promote changes for the development of horizontal structures: in communication and decision-making processes, in the organizational culture, and in community members' relationships and values (Coronel Llamas, 2005). When every school member feels that they are part of a community (including teachers, principals, service staff, students, and families), there is an atmosphere of trust within the school that facilitates principals' work (Bernal & Ibarrola, 2015).

Recommendations

This article does not pretend to conclude with a summary of the situation of teachers and principals who work in secondary schools in Argentina. Instead, from the analysis we conducted on this subject, we suggest some alternatives for action. These offer the appropriate organizational and educational support from which distributed and teacher leadership may be encouraged, developed, and sustained.

To begin, administrators should launch initiatives to hire full-time teachers to ensure that they develop a more consolidated and engaged relationship with the school, which would allow them not only to teach but also perform other functions in order to have better opportunities for teacher leadership development. Evidently, this demands that laws be revised and updated having in mind the new challenges schools face in times of great change, with a focus on the importance of strengthening improvement processes from the school itself.

Second, we believe that a reconfiguration of principals' work is necessary so that they can have a higher degree of autonomy to, for example, form teacher teams. Counting on full-time teachers will empower principals and enable them to facilitate distributed leadership, capitalizing on the diversity of the available competencies of every teacher for the benefit of the school and the educational system. This has already been noted by principals as one of the strategies with a greater impact

on secondary school improvement in Argentina (Ministerio de Educación de la Nación, 2018).

Finally, we suggest that research should be conducted to reflect on the type of training necessary for teachers and principals to become leaders who assume various responsibilities and gain a new perspective of the role each one plays in school improvement. Applying these leadership theories without previous contextualized training would easily lead to chaos in Argentine schools.

We are advocating for a change of paradigm for the conception and organization of teachers and principals' work in Argentina, a paradigm that recognizes that numerous improvement processes originate from the school members themselves. We believe that the way toward the introduction and development of distributed leadership and teacher leadership will not be paved unless it is accompanied by educational policies that provide the appropriate legal framework and by educational processes aimed at training teachers and principals.

Conclusions

In rapidly changing times, it is necessary to promote debates regarding the way schools should be designed so that they can be alert to the profound transformations that unfold today in the labor market, the economy, the social/cultural world, and the political/civic world. These debates require immediate attention in secondary schools in Argentina: the poor learning results obtained in national and international assessments show that student learning is at stake, and that the future achievements of many young people are compromised in this volatile, globalized world. As we have said before, students' outcomes are not the consequence of an accident or bad luck, but rather they are the result of a dysfunctional ecosystem of interrelated dimensions. We have focused on the school organizational dimensions, particularly teachers' work conditions and principals' role configurations. We have tried to provide a lens through which we can understand and view opportunities for improvement.

Given the difficulties the school system is undergoing, we believe that change should be centered in the school itself, turning it into the cornerstone for reflection and promotion of sustained improvement processes. The proposals drawn from distributed leadership and teacher leadership give us some clues on how to move toward sustainable improvement by means of gaining access to and taking advantage of all the available potential, which is distributed among principals and teachers, increasing the human and social capital available and strengthening teachers' morale and professionalism, which are predictors of better students' achievements (Fullan, 2004; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2020; OECD, 2014).

As already stated, in Argentina, secondary school teachers are hired on a part-time basis, and their time at the school is restricted to teaching. This reinforces a culture of individual work and limits the possibility of organizing teams engaged with the educational project and the school's institutional life. Principals, on their

part, work with scarce levels of autonomy for the selection and recruitment of human resources, especially in state schools, and find that their time is consumed in performing administrative tasks, which limit their opportunities to encourage teacher leadership. The combination of both dynamics constrains the opportunities for improvement because conditions for the development of distributed and teacher leadership cannot be promoted.

Nurturing distributed leadership by enhancing teacher leadership is the only means of conducting sustainable leadership practices, not only by forming consolidated teams but also by implementing a culture for reflection, participation, and commitment aimed at student learning improvement.

Returning to the title of our work, we understand that the development of leadership as a tool for improvement is still a long way from being a reality in secondary schools in Argentina. The appropriate conditions to promote and sustain teacher leadership practices we have mentioned are not given yet. In conclusion, new forms of organizing teachers' work and a new configuration of the role of principals are relevant for secondary schools in Argentina, and in the light of the outcomes observed, we understand that it is also an issue that requires urgent attention.

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Chapter 11

Teacher Leadership in the Moroccan Context: Perceptions and Practices



Samira Idelcadi, Samira Rguibi, and Abdelmajid Bouziane

Abstract This chapter investigates the perceptions and practices of teacher leadership among Moroccan teachers of the English language. It is part of a multi-stage mixed-method study that aimed to investigate the practice and impact of teacher leadership among English Language Teachers (ELT) in Morocco. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire that was administered to 112 Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. Findings from this study indicated that perceptions of teacher leadership differ among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. Some ELT teacher leaders tend to acknowledge their leadership, while others still hesitate to refer to themselves as ‘leaders’. Findings from this research also revealed the diversity and complexity of leadership practice among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. Results showed the potential of teacher leadership to impact teacher professional learning. However, this impact is dependent on the professional learning and leadership opportunities provided for teachers. This research draws several implications: First, teachers need quality professional learning and leadership opportunities to grow and develop as leaders. Second, teacher leadership needs to be recognised and encouraged at the system level as well as nurtured at the grassroots. Third, teacher leadership should be sustained through supportive culture and structures.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Teacher professional learning · Teacher leader

Introduction

Research on teacher leadership is growing exponentially (Harris & Jones, 2019; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Killion et al., 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). There is a renewed interest in teacher leadership as a catalyst for educational reform and school change (Huang, 2016; Hunzicker, 2012). To cope with

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the different challenges facing schools, there is a need for multiple leaders at all levels. Schools nowadays need to adapt to the continuously changing local and global environments. This cannot be achieved without the contribution of leaders at all levels in schools, including students and teachers. Although there is a plethora of research on teacher leadership, there is still a need for more empirical studies conducted in different contexts. These studies might contribute to understanding the practice and impact of teacher leadership on school change. Within this perspective, this study is conducted in the Moroccan context and aims to contribute to the existing literature on teacher leadership.

In Morocco, research and interest in teacher leadership is emerging (Amghar, 2018; Belhiyah, 2008; Idelcadi, 2019; Idelcadi et al., 2020). There is also a growing interest in leadership for change at the system level. The resurgence of interest in leadership for school change in Morocco was highlighted with the introduction of new reform initiatives: The Strategic Vision for Reform 2015–2030 (2015) and the Framework Law 15–17 (2019a). These reform policies target mostly the reprofessionalisation of the teaching profession, the development of leadership at all levels (Strategic Vision, 2015–2030), and system governance (The Framework Law 15–17, 2019a). In the Moroccan context, an analysis of policy documents (Idelcadi et al., 2020) showed that there are ample opportunities for the growth of teacher leadership in the Moroccan educational system. The first opportunity is linked to how teaching and learning are perceived. For instance, the English Language Teaching Guidelines (2007) describe how the teaching of English as a foreign language in Morocco should not be limited to the teaching of the four skills. Teachers are invited to engage students in working on projects either inside classes, within schools, or beyond. They are also encouraged to coach students on different projects and activities in school clubs (School Clubs Guide, 2009b). Project work and school clubs offer the first space where both students' and teachers' leadership are likely to emerge and develop.

Another opportunity for the practice of leadership was introduced with the National Charter of Education and Training (2000). Within this reform, 'School Management Councils' were created in schools. These structures were meant to provide teachers with opportunities to express their opinions relevant to important school decisions. These management councils could facilitate teachers' involvement in the decision-making process in schools. However, research shows that the way these councils are structured often confines teachers' roles to mere consultation rather than real participation (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Other opportunities that could provide the space for the growth of teacher leadership are related to formal positional roles created for teachers such as 'teacher coach' (M.N. 155, 2009a), 'teacher mentor' (M.N. 134, 2016b; M.N. 95, 2016a), and 'master teacher' (M.N. 114, 2019b). The creation of these formal leadership roles offers formal opportunities for teachers in Morocco to exercise leadership.

These opportunities, however, are often crippled by lack of training and lack of incentives (Idelcadi et al., 2020). Several challenges might also constrain the development of leadership in Moroccan schools. First, although 'leadership for change' is highlighted in the new Strategic Vision Reform (2015–2030), it is still the leadership of traditional school leaders (school principals, supervisors, district leaders)

that is considered as a catalyst for school change. In practice, traditional school leaders are referred to as ‘managers’. There is no explicit or implicit reference to the ‘leadership’ of teachers in the new reform. Teachers remain ‘implementers’ of reform rather than key change agents. Second, there is a lot of ambiguity surrounding the term ‘leadership’ in the new vision for reform. Idelcadi et al. (2020, p. 41) argued that *‘the most widely used term in the new vision for reform is “management” (57%), while “administration” is used only 6% of the time and “leadership” (16%)’*. In the new vision, there is an overlap between the use of three terms: ‘administration’, ‘management’ and ‘leadership’. The three terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Idelcadi, 2019). Research, however, clearly differentiates between these terms (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1996). Research also highlighted the importance of both leadership and management for school change (Kotter, 1996). This confusion around terminology is likely to create confusion in understanding and hence the practice of leadership. It would be hard to develop teacher leadership in an environment where there is confusion surrounding the meaning of ‘administration’, ‘leadership’ and ‘management’. Other challenges that might impede the growth of teacher leadership in Moroccan schools are related to organisational factors. Several Moroccan scholars argued that schools in Morocco are still faced with ‘daunting conditions’ and much ‘policy centralism’ (Amghar, 2018; Belhiyah, 2008). These challenges might limit the growth of teacher leadership in Moroccan schools. In spite of all these challenges, many teachers exercise leadership informally. Their leadership, however, is mostly unrecognised and underresearched.

Existing research on teacher leadership mostly focuses on highlighting the importance of teacher leadership for school improvement (Harris & Muijs, 2005, 2007; Lambert, 2003), benefits (York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and challenges of teacher leadership (Murphy, 2005). There are, however, few empirical studies on the practice of teacher leadership and how it is conceptualised in different contexts. There is also a need for more empirical studies that aim to investigate the practice of leadership among informal teacher leaders. This study aims to uncover the practice of leadership among teachers who do not necessarily hold a formal leadership position. The aim is to investigate the perceptions and practices among ELT (English Language teaching) teacher leaders in the Moroccan context. This study is likely to contribute to the understanding of how teacher leadership is conceptualised and practiced and offer implications for policy and practice.

Literature Review

The Importance of Teacher Leadership

Research is abundant with evidence on the importance of teacher leadership for educational improvement (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Killion et al., 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to Frost (2008), teacher leaders can contribute to knowledge building in their schools and beyond. Moreover,

teacher leaders facilitate their own professional growth as well as the professional learning of their colleagues (Killion et al., 2016). Teachers are also considered ‘*co-constructors of educational change and key contributors to policy making*’ (Harris & Jones, 2019, p. 123). Furthermore, teacher leaders can impact students’ learning and affect outcomes (Harris & Jones, 2019). Some researchers, however, argued that teacher leadership has ‘*non-significant effect on students’ engagement*’ (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 429). These authors also posited that there is no need to advocate for teacher leadership as ‘*silver bullet*’ that can be used to speed up school change. In their view, school reform rather requires a ‘*complex set of variables, including leadership*’. They further argued that teacher leadership essentially emerged amid calls to ‘*reprofessionalise*’ the profession of teaching. However, ‘*grafting leadership onto the concept of teaching actually devalues the status of teaching in the long run*’ (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 429). They added that ‘*if everyone is a leader ... the concept loses all value*’. Nevertheless, ignoring the role of teachers as leaders might, in itself, contribute to devaluing the teaching profession as it undermines the efforts that teachers invest in shaping teaching and learning in their classrooms, schools and communities.

Teacher Leadership: Unresolved Issues

The importance of teacher leadership for school improvement is widely recognised by scholars. However, there is still no consensus on the essence of teacher leadership. There are confusing and conflicting definitions of the concept (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Torrance et al., 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and ‘*the meaning of leadership remains murky*’ (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 430). The ambiguity that surrounds conceptualisation of teacher leadership might be due to the fact that teacher leadership is context-bound. According to Killion et al. (2016, p. 4), ‘*teacher leadership is contextually defined and operationalized in ways that are appropriate to the unique characteristics of each school or district*’. Because it is framed within a context, several factors and conditions might either help, or hinder, the growth of teacher leadership. These contextual factors and conditions also shape what is considered ‘*leadership*’ practice in that particular context and what is not.

Teacher Leadership as Exercising ‘Influence’

In spite of the ambiguities surrounding conceptualisation of teacher leadership, attempts to define the concept are numerous (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000; Danielson, 2007; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Harris & Jones, 2019; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Olvist & Malmstrom, 2017; Wasley, 1991; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to these authors, teacher leadership is about engaging colleagues in the

experimentation and analysis of practice (Wasley, 1991), inspiring excellence in practice (Childs-Bowen et al. 2000) and leading both within and beyond the classroom (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Teacher leadership is also described as inviting others to take action (Danielson, 2007) and '*developing pedagogical excellence*' (Harris & Jones, 2019, p. 124). The commonality among all these definitions is that teachers lead through exercising 'influence'. The focus of their influence is the improvement of teaching and learning. This, however, does not imply that some teachers are 'leaders', or influencers, and others are 'followers'. It rather rests on the belief that teachers are untapped resources and that all teachers have leadership potential (Frost, 2008; Lambert, 2003). Therefore, teacher leadership is likely to emerge when teachers are provided with leadership opportunities, adequate support, and when they are encouraged to initiate action.

Teacher Leadership as an 'Activity'

Teacher leadership is also often defined through enumerating 'school activities' that teacher leaders often engage in. However, the term 'activity' is very broad. It may mean any action taken, or any event that happens in the school. In this respect, York-Barr & Duke (2004, p. 286) stated that '*school activities can include many varied events and practices, including fund raising, recess, classroom instruction, decision making, parent conferences, teacher assistance teams, and science fairs*'. Therefore, leadership as an 'activity' might mean many things at the same time. That is why some scholars have argued that teacher leadership has become '*a catch-all phrase for any form of teacher activity*' (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 260). Hence, the difficulty of finding a common agreed-upon definition might make any research on teacher leadership very challenging. As York-Barr & Duke (2004, p. 286) argued '*in absence of a valid definition, measurement and analysis are problematic*'. However, it is this challenge that makes research on teacher leadership even more appealing for scholars.

Teacher Leadership as Performing a 'Role'

Attempts to decipher what leadership means also rely on studying teacher leaders' roles. Research shows that teacher leaders strive to improve teachers' and students' learning through exercising different roles (Greenlee, 2007; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). These roles are either assigned through a formal position or informal. Informal roles are often voluntary, self-initiated and non-positional (Frost, 2008, 2012; Helterbran, 2010; Killion et al. 2016). Investigating the type of roles and work teacher leaders engage in may clear some of the ambiguity that often surrounds the concept of 'teacher leadership'. However, some scholars have argued that it is this variety of roles that even complicates any attempt to conceptualise teacher

leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Some of the formal roles found in the literature include coaching, mentoring and leading teams (Harris & Muijs, 2003) and serving as union representative, department head or curriculum specialist (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Some informal roles include sharing practice, collaborating with colleagues (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001), leading professional development (Hunzicker, 2012), and serving as a community advocate or a member of professional association (Killion et al., 2016). The success and sustainability of these roles depends much on school conditions, school culture, and how much support teachers are provided with in their practice. As teacher leadership is context-bound, teacher leaders' roles might also differ from one context to another. This variability of roles could add to the complexity of conceptualising teacher leadership.

Teacher Leadership as 'Commitment to Learning'

Research shows that the most important drive for leadership engagement is the urge to improve students' and colleagues' learning. A study conducted on 81 exemplary secondary school teachers revealed that teachers are motivated by '*commitment to education, a desire to learn, doing their best*' and '*ethics of care*' (Collinson, 2012, p. 250). Collinson (2012, p. 256) further added that the common point between all these exemplary teachers is '*their love for learning and their commitment to helping students learn*'. Similarly, some scholars stated that when teacher leaders saw a need in their school, they strove to address it (Helterbran, 2010; Killion et al., 2016). In another view, Torrance et al. (2016, p. 47) stated that teacher leaders have different motives for engaging in leadership practice. Some are extrinsically motivated. They are often '*seeking to have influence on others for the good of the children*'. Teacher leaders might also be simply seeking promotion (Torrance et al., 2016). Others are intrinsically motivated by the '*drive to become a better teacher*', or they aspire to a '*more fulfilling role*' (Torrance et al., 2016, p. 47). Although the reasons for engaging in leadership activities are numerous, Torrance et al. (2016, p. 47) argued that the primary motivation for teacher leaders is '*seeking to have a great influence (beyond the classroom) in helping pupils to learn and develop*'.

Research also shows that students' learning and teachers' learning are interrelated. As teachers lead and engage in different leadership activities, they are also very likely to learn through the process. The connection between leadership practice and leadership learning is evidenced in the literature (Barth, 2001; Collinson, 2012), and it is difficult to talk about practice without talking about learning. Lambert (2003, p. 2) argued that '*learning and leading are deeply intertwined*'. Other scholars shared the same view about learning and leadership. Collinson (2012), for example, argued that as teachers lead, they also learn tremendously. Similarly, York-Barr and Duke (2004, p. 259) posited that '*leading and learning are inseparable*'. In their view, the greatest impact of teacher leadership is the '*growth and learning*

among teacher leaders themselves'. It can be argued then that investing in teacher leadership is a commitment to both student and teacher learning.

Contributing to the attempts to uncover the essence of teacher leadership in different contexts, this study aimed to investigate the practice of teacher leadership in the Moroccan context. The study focused on the practice of teacher leadership among ELT teacher leaders. It is based on the assumption that leadership practice and leadership learning are intertwined (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), and that teacher professional learning and students' learning are interrelated (Barth, 2001; Frost, 2008). Thus, this study will draw implications for the development and sustainability of teacher leadership in schools to improve both student and teacher learning in Morocco and beyond.

Conceptual Framework

This study used two frames as a tool for analysis. The first frame draws on Spillane et al.'s (2001) model of distributed leadership. According to Spillane et al. (2001, p. 24), leadership is framed within '*activity*' and '*interaction*' of leaders. It is in this form of interaction that leadership is constructed. Leadership is, thus, not related to a position or role. It is rather '*stretched over*' to include multiple leaders in a school (Spillane et al., 2001). According to Spillane et al. (2001), leadership is based on a collective endeavour and agency (Spillane et al., 2001). It is then '*emerging*' from the interaction of multiple leaders as they work together to perform a task (Spillane et al., 2001). Distributing leadership in schools is, however, confronted by structural and cultural barriers that often operate in schools (Harris, 2005; Mayrowetz, 2008). This frame of analysis helped in understanding how teacher leadership is framed.

The second frame of analysis is based on the work of Fairman and Mackenzie (2012). Their work draws much on the seminal study of York-Barr and Duke (2004). According to York-Barr and Duke (2004), teachers lead through both formal and informal roles. They exercise influence through focusing on teaching and learning. Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, 2014) expanded the work of York-Barr and Duke (2004) to include self-initiated leadership and to talk specifically about how teacher leaders exercise influence. Fairman and Mackenzie (2014, p. 62) posited that their model '*describes spheres of leadership and depicts the complexity and multi-dimensionality of teacher leadership*'. In their view, teacher leadership can take different forms and can be exercised in different spheres at the same time (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012), as illustrated in Table 11.1. Teacher leaders might as well move from one sphere of practice to another in either linear or non-linear position. They also added that teacher leadership is likely to emerge in different contexts. The most important drive for teacher leaders is their willingness to engage in professional learning and their commitment to students' learning. In all the cases studied, Fairman & Mackenzie (2012, p. 239) observed that '*it was primarily teachers, not principals, who initiated action*'. This frame of analysis was useful in understanding teacher leadership practice in the Moroccan context.

Table 11.1 Descriptions of the spheres of teacher leadership action for learning

| Sphere | Description |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A | Driven by the urge to improve their professional learning, knowledge, skills and expertise, teachers decide to engage in leadership |
| B | Teachers experiment, innovate and reflect on practice to improve students' learning and change classroom practice |
| C | Teachers share opinions, ideas, experiences and approaches to teaching and learning |
| D | Teachers work together and collaborate to lead projects and try new instructional approaches |
| E | Teachers build new relationships and work with different groups to change norms, beliefs and practices |
| F | Teachers question practice, advocate for school change and build the necessary support for that |
| G | Teachers participate in planned school improvement initiatives |
| H | Teachers collaborate with parents and the wider community |
| I | Teachers share their expertise and their work in different spaces (conferences, professional NGOs, etc.) |

Adapted from: Fairman and Mackenzie (2012)

Method

Context of the Study

Education in Morocco has been the ground of myriad reforms aiming to increase the quality of the Moroccan educational system. The National Charter of Education and Training (NCET) (2000) was a turning point in educational change in Morocco. Contrary to the previous fragmented reform policies, the NCET targeted several aspects of reform. The NCET aimed to combat illiteracy, provide wider access to schooling, review teacher training, curriculum and evaluation system, and encourage the mastery of languages. Critiques of this reform initiative, however, argued that it was rather quantity oriented, and it failed to create any substantial change in the Moroccan educational system. This reform was soon succeeded by another initiative to improve the Moroccan educational system. The Emergency Plan was launched (2009–2012) to speed educational reforms. It aimed at ensuring compulsory schooling until the age of 15, encouraging initiative and achievement, and resolving systemic challenges related to reprofessionalisation, governance and the quality of teacher training. To achieve this, the Emergency Plan relied on the provision of necessary financial resources and the participation of all stakeholders in system change. This reform also failed to achieve much on the ground. This failure was partly due to 'policy centralism' (Amghar, 2018). Much of the decision-making still takes the form of top-down initiatives that fail to include the voice of all actors on the ground. However, in both reforms, the important role of teachers as key players in any educational reform is often ignored. As Amghar (2018, p. 12) argued, 'teachers' views are often marginalised and their needs over-looked'.

The launch of the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 (2015) and the framework Law 15–17 (2019) introduced important changes into the Moroccan educational system. It increased system accountability and introduced audit and system evaluation at all levels. The reform stressed the importance of leadership as a collaborative and collective endeavour involving all stakeholders in schools including parents and students. In spite of giving a huge importance to ‘leadership for change’, the new reform, however, ‘*does not acknowledge teacher leadership as a form of leadership crucial to the success of reform*’ (Idelcadi, 2019, p. 71). These successive reforms created a radical shift in how school leadership is viewed. Previously seniority and experience were the main criteria for the recruitment of school leaders. Nowadays, recruitment processes are more meritocratic. Most future principals are teacher leaders who have been engaged in different activities in their schools or communities and who aspire to a more formal leadership position. This has contributed to the emergence of more collaborative and democratic forms of leadership in schools.

These three reform initiatives show the growth of interest in educational leadership in Morocco. There is a shift from a focus on ‘administration’ with the NCET (2000) to more management mechanisms infused into the system with the launch of the Emergency Plan (2009–2012) to the growth of interest in leadership for system change with the introduction of the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 (2015) and the Framework Law 15–17 (2019). So, it can be argued that the policy climate is favourable for the growth and emergence of teacher leadership. Though traditional views of leadership are still dominant in Moroccan schools, this policy shift in how leadership is viewed might create an optimum culture for the growth and emergence of teacher leadership.

Participants

The survey was administered to ELT teacher leaders from 11 Regional Academies of Education and Training (AREF) in Morocco. A total of 112 teachers of English in public middle and high schools in Morocco completed the survey. The majority of respondents were male (62%), while only 34% were female. The study included the views of 85 high school teachers and 27 middle school teachers. The type of sampling used in the study was purposeful snowballing sampling. Participants in the study were chosen on the basis of several criteria. First, they were considered as teacher leaders by school leaders, ELT supervisors, or colleagues. Second, they were active both within and outside their classroom. Third, they were involved in some leadership activities such as leading projects, coaching students in school clubs, mentoring colleagues, volunteering to lead professional learning of their colleagues, or they serve as members of leadership teams in professional networks or professional associations. Any ELT teachers, who were considered leaders by their colleagues, or their supervisors, were sent the questionnaire and were invited to participate. It was not necessary for these teachers to have a formal positional leadership role.

Data Collection

The study adopted a mixed method design methodology which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2014). The aim behind the choice of mixed methods design was to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership practices among Moroccan ELT teachers. Data were collected through the use of a 5-point Likert scale survey, which was distributed electronically to 112 Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. The questionnaire was emailed by the researcher and through the help of ELT supervisors in different regional academies in Morocco. ELT supervisors were asked to send the questionnaire to five-to-ten teachers whom they considered 'teacher leaders'. The questionnaire used to collect data included both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. The aim behind adding open-ended questions was to provide data that could help '*capture best the experiences of the participants in their own words*' (Creswell, 2012, p. 433). The questions related to leadership practice were based on the literature review. Several studies described the different teacher leadership practices and teacher leader roles. These roles could be either formal or informal. Informal roles are also considered as 'non-positional' (Frost, 2008, 2012). The items included in this part of the questionnaire emanate from the work of York-Barr and Duke (2004), Harris and Muijs (2005), Greenlee (2007), Murphy (2005), Frost (2008, 2012), Fairman and Mackenzie (2012, 2014); and Wenner and Campbell (2017). These studies were helpful in understanding the different practices teacher leaders engage in either formally or informally.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were gathered through google forms, which offered to collect data with different percentages. The data were then loaded onto Excel sheets and analysed through SPSS V.22 program. Data were analysed through descriptive statistics and factor analysis. Descriptive analysis was helpful in providing the general trends in the data while factor analysis, which was conducted through Principal Component Analysis (PCA), was used to examine the factorial validity of the measures. In order to do that, two statistical measures were used. The first measure was the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Internal consistency of the measures was checked through conducting a reliability test. Cronbach Alpha was computed. All scales had a reliability of more than 0.7, a KMO value of more than 0.6 and significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

Open-ended questions were treated as qualitative data and were analysed according to the grounded theory procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As a first step, data were rewritten and as one script and reread. Important key words, expressions and phrases were underlined and specific codes were assigned to these key words, expressions and phrases. This is called line-by-line coding by Charmaz (2006). As

a second step, data were studied again while referring to the codes and to the theoretical framework. These codes were then grouped into a category using axial coding. As a third step, the first code and second axial codes were grouped, data were examined carefully again and were compared with axial codes to check for patterns and reveal relationships among the codes so that they could be grouped into larger and broader categories (theoretical codes) while constantly comparing data.

Findings

Findings from this research study revealed the existence of different perceptions and diverse forms of teacher leadership practice among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. It also showed the complexity of leadership and emphasised the challenge of defining teacher leadership.

Perceptions of Teacher Leadership in the Moroccan Context

Confined and Extended Leadership

Findings from the survey part of this study revealed that Moroccan ELT teacher leaders hold different perceptions of teacher leadership. Some teacher leaders perceive their role as limited to the boundaries of the classroom space. Others, however, acknowledge that their leadership extends beyond the classroom. When asked whether they consider themselves leaders, the majority (84%) of ELT teacher leaders confirmed that they consider themselves leaders. A noticeable minority (16%), however, stated that they don't see themselves as 'leaders'. When asked to explain such refusal to acknowledge leadership, their responses differ. Some teacher leaders stated that *'I am just a teacher'*, and *'I don't consider myself as one. Besides, my work and initiatives are within the confines of my classroom'*. Other teacher leaders listed some personal factors such as *'lack of confidence'*, or *'it is my shyness ... I prefer to work with my students in my classroom'*. These factors limit their work and initiatives to the classroom space. Other respondents referred to some professional and organisational factors to explain their lack of engagement in leadership activities, such as *'lack of time'*, *'syllabus overload'* and *'lack of training'*. Similarly, a teacher leader expressed his hesitation to call himself a teacher leader by saying: *'I still do not consider myself as a leader, but I still answer the question as "one"'*. Another teacher leader stated that she was waiting for an opportunity to lead: *'I haven't got the chance to be a leader yet'*. So, perceptions of teacher leadership differ among those teacher leaders who acknowledge their leadership and those who perceive their work as limited to the confines of the classroom.

Influence and Agency

Findings from the qualitative part of this study further revealed that some teacher leaders still hold ambivalent views as to whether to accept or deny their leadership. Others, however, do not hesitate to embrace their leadership role. They consider it as an opportunity to exercise influence and agency. These teacher leaders often have to challenge themselves and navigate the rules so that they can lead and exercise influence. In this respect, a teacher leader argued:

In Morocco, the teacher is an executive employee who must respect the rules of the game. But as far as I am concerned, I am challenging myself and the rules. The teacher should not be like any common employee, the teacher should influence more than teach. TEACHING IS A JOB BUT INFLUENCING IS A CAREER.

In this view, the role of teachers goes beyond merely teaching a language. Teachers' role is to influence others and challenge the prescribed roles and rules.

Similarly, other teacher leaders see their leadership role as the exercise of agency. In their views, teacher leaders should invest efforts and strive to make a difference in students' lives. They should collaborate more, innovate, and take the initiative both for their own self-improvement and for the growth of others. A teacher leader stated that:

A teacher leader is an agent of change seeking self-improvement, professional efficiency, collaboration, and an innovative person always looking for making a difference in their lives and those of their students. I used to maintain that it's enough for me to do my job in class and leave anything else to others. Now, I take initiatives in improving myself and others more and more.

In this perspective, teacher leadership is about exercising agency and taking the initiative. The aim of taking action is the improvement of the self and others. Teaching and leading goes beyond simply doing one's 'job'. It is more than that. Teachers as leaders innovate, collaborate and initiate action. It can be concluded that different perceptions shape the practice of teacher leadership in the Moroccan context.

The Practice of Teacher Leadership in the Moroccan Context

Autonomy and Initiative

To understand the practice of teacher leadership among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders, participants were asked how frequently they engage in different leadership practices. A five-point Likert scale (scored from 0 = never to 5 = always) was used. Results as displayed in Table 11.2 summarise the descriptive statistics and factor loadings for these items. Teacher leaders reported that the most frequent leadership practice was working on class projects with students, which scored the highest mean and lowest standard deviation ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .856$). It was followed by

Table 11.2 Descriptive statistics of teacher leadership practice

| | <i>N</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | Rotated loadings |
|-----------------------|----------|------|-----------|------------------|
| Coaching students | 112 | 4.00 | 1.013 | .714 |
| Classroom projects | 112 | 4.07 | .856 | .699 |
| Action research | 112 | 2.87 | 1.204 | .720 |
| Community projects | 112 | 3.16 | 1.234 | .710 |
| PLC membership | 112 | 3.89 | 1.181 | .745 |
| Leading/co-lead a PLC | 112 | 2.79 | 1.219 | .788 |
| School projects | 112 | 3.84 | .964 | .783 |

coaching students in school clubs ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.013$), working on school projects ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .964$), and belonging to a professional learning community ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.181$). Working on projects beyond school ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.234$) scored considerably lower scores in comparison. The lowest scores were related to teacher engagement in action research ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.204$) and leading or co-leading a professional learning community ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.219$). These results indicate that the most frequent leadership practices among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders relate to introducing innovative practices to their classrooms, coaching students and working on class and school projects and belonging to a professional learning community. However, leading action research projects and leading or co-leading a professional learning community were identified as less common leadership practices among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders.

In order to evaluate the scale, validity and reliability tests were conducted via SPSS V.22. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted through principal component analysis (PCA). After conducting the initial phase of factor analysis, items that had a factorial contribution of less than 0.5 were dropped from the scale. A second stage of factor analysis was conducted with Varimax rotation. Results of factor analysis confirmed the unidimensionality of the factor. All the items remaining account for explaining 54.4% of the variance. The results of KMO statistic showed the value of $KMO = .857$, which is quite above the acceptable limit of .5. The Bartlett Test of Sphericity was also significant (p -value was less than 0.001). Reliability test of the scale was measured through Cronbach Alpha. Results showed that the Cronbach value is 0.864, which indicates a good reliability of the measure (Field, 2009).

Findings from the qualitative part of this study showed similar results. ELT teacher leaders tend to lead different projects either at the class, school or beyond the school level. They also engage in coaching students in various school clubs. However, results also showed that some constraints might limit teachers' professional autonomy and initiative. Teacher leaders described the need for more autonomy and freedom to make professional judgements in relation to the curriculum. They asked for more support and resources to be able to exercise leadership. A teacher leader argued that '*I think teachers should have more freedom, resources, and administrative support to be able to lead effectively*'. Similarly, asking for more professional autonomy and better working conditions to engage in leadership, another teacher leader demanded '*more chance to work freely. Also, reduce the*

hours of work and the number of students in class'. Additionally, another teacher leader suggested that teachers should take the initiative and create their own professional learning opportunities despite all the daunting working conditions that might challenge their leadership:

I had the opportunity to grow and every teacher should create his own opportunity. Despite all the circumstances, a teacher of English must be different. This is how I see it; we must be passionate about teaching and learning. Administrators and policy makers may help a lot by providing the needed support for teachers but it's actually comes from the teachers themselves.

For this teacher leader, engaging in leadership is linked to professional growth. So, teachers should strive to find opportunities to exercise leadership and grow professionally.

Leading and Learning

To understand the practice of teacher leadership more deeply and to investigate how this practice might affect teacher learning, participants in this study were asked to rate the frequency of their engagement in different leadership practices using a five-point Likert scale (scored from 0 = never to 5 = always). Table 11.3 summarises the descriptive statistics for the six items. Results showed that reflection on practice was the most rated professional learning activity by the majority of ELT teacher leaders ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .794$), followed by trying out new activities and materials in class ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .740$) and taking the initiative for their own professional development ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .824$). Similarly, ELT teachers reported high levels of engagement when it comes to designing their own teaching materials ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .836$). However, collecting feedback from students and using it to plan instruction scored relatively lower frequency and higher standard deviation ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.024$). These findings indicate that teacher leaders learn more through engaging in different leadership activities, such as reflection on practice, trying out activities in class, designing their own materials, and initiating their own learning. However, collecting feedback as a source of learning was less frequent as a leadership practice among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders.

In order to evaluate the scale construct, validity and reliability tests were calculated via SPSS V.22. Following the same procedure, exploratory factor analysis was

Table 11.3 Descriptive statistics of teacher professional learning

| | <i>N</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | Rotated loadings |
|------------------------------|----------|------|-----------|------------------|
| Designing teaching materials | 112 | 4.26 | .836 | .692 |
| Reflecting on practice | 112 | 4.37 | .794 | .771 |
| Initiating PL | 112 | 4.29 | .824 | .828 |
| Trying out new activities | 112 | 4.33 | .740 | .853 |
| Collecting feedback | 112 | 3.68 | 1.024 | .746 |
| Reading Ed literature | 112 | 4.04 | .962 | .761 |

conducted through principal component analysis (PCA). Results of factor analysis confirmed the factorial structure in one dimension. All the items remaining account for explaining 60.32% of the variance. The results of KMO statistic showed the value of $KMO = 0.838$, which is quite above the acceptable limit of .5. The Bartlett test of sphericity was also significant (p -value was less than 0.001). The reliability test of the scale showed that the Cronbach value is .861, which is sufficiently more than 0.7. This indicates a good reliability of the measure.

Similar findings were confirmed through the analysis of the qualitative part of this study. Teacher leadership engagement was found to facilitate professional learning. Many ELT teacher leaders shared that engaging in leadership practices helped boost their confidence, ensured a better understanding of students' needs and interests, and honed teacher leadership skills and expertise. A teacher leader acknowledged that:

My knowledge of students increased. I developed a deeper expertise in designing tasks, tailoring them to meet the specific needs of my students. My confidence in my skills and knowledge grew deeper.

Similarly, other participants affirmed that engaging in leadership activities opened new possibilities for them, enhanced their job satisfaction and helped them understand teaching and learning better:

I had a better understanding of what teaching and learning involves. It has enriched my knowledge and increased my enjoyment of teaching.

Leadership practice has also opened new possibilities for a teacher leader. He stated:

I got new horizons; I keep learning, sharing and experimenting new things in life.

Leadership Opportunities

To understand the different opportunities for leadership provided for Moroccan ELT teacher leaders through different formal structures and roles created for them, teacher leaders were asked to rate the frequency of their participation in different formal and informal leadership activities provided for them either by other school leaders or through educational associations and networks. A Likert scale (0 = never and 5 = always) was used to collect ELT teacher leaders' responses. Table 11.4 shows the descriptive statistics and factor loadings for these items. The most frequent form of leadership engagement was collaboration with colleagues to plan projects and activities ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .994$). This was followed by sharing expertise in workshops organised by the ELT supervisor ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.170$.) and sharing their work in conferences organised by educational associations ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.407$). The least frequent teacher leadership engagement is related to coaching and mentoring colleagues ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.170$) and the lowest reported averages were related to peer observation ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.029$) and participating in colleagues' evaluation ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.095$). These results indicate that Moroccan teacher leaders tend to collaborate with colleagues on leading projects and activities

Table 11.4 Descriptive statistics of leadership opportunities

| | <i>N</i> | Mean | <i>SD</i> | Rotated loading |
|-------------------------------------------|----------|------|-----------|-----------------|
| Sharing exp. in supervisor workshops | 112 | 3.50 | 1.170 | .808 |
| Coaching and mentoring colleagues | 112 | 3.10 | 1.170 | .804 |
| Peer observation | 112 | 2.88 | 1.029 | .665 |
| Peer evaluation | 112 | 2.81 | 1.095 | .717 |
| Sharing exp. in NGOs' conferences | 112 | 3.17 | 1.407 | .799 |
| Collaborating with colleagues on projects | 112 | 3.55 | .994 | .696 |

in their schools. They also tend to share their work in workshops organised by ELT supervisors. However, here, opinions are divided given the higher standard deviation reported. To a lesser extent, teacher leaders tend to share their work in spaces provided by educational NGOs. However, participating in mentoring and coaching colleagues proves to be limited. Similarly, peer evaluation and peer observation were reported as the least frequent leadership practices teachers engage in.

In order to evaluate the scale construct, validity and reliability tests were calculated via SPSS V.22. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted through principal component analysis (PCA). Results of factor analysis confirmed the factorial structure in one dimension. All the items remaining account for explaining 56.30% of the variance. The results of KMO statistic showed the value of $KMO = .828$, which is quite above the acceptable limit of $.5$. The Bartlett test of sphericity was also significant (p -value was less than 0.001). The reliability test of the scale showed that the Cronbach value is $.840$, which indicates a good reliability of the measure.

Findings from the qualitative part of this study revealed the shortage of opportunities for professional learning. In Morocco, the provision of teacher professional learning is part of the role of ELT supervisors. However, in front of the growing number of supervisors who retire each year without being replaced, the huge numbers of novice teachers recruited annually and because of the multiple responsibilities of supervisors, teachers in some areas are sometimes left without any opportunities for in-service professional learning. This was described by a teacher leader as follows:

Policy makers have ignored in-service trainings. It is high time the Ministry should care about this matter. ELT supervisors should encourage teacher professional development and guide teachers. For 12 years of teaching, I have not attended any supervisors' meetings, since there is no supervisor where I have worked.

Similarly, another teacher leader described the need for quality professional learning opportunities and asked for more support and more incentives:

Teachers should be given appropriate opportunities to attend high-quality conferences, seminars, and pedagogical meetings. On-going assistance is needed to make teachers better see how their mission should be carried out. To put it in a nutshell, measures should target in-service training. Meanwhile, (it is) needless to mention how incentives make a huge difference in enhancing excellence and success at all levels.

Additionally, a teacher leader expressed a lack of opportunities to participate in the decision-making process in relation to curriculum and pedagogical innovation.

Teachers request that they should be able to make their own professional judgments regarding teaching and learning. This teacher leader expressed a need to take part in decisions specifically related to syllabus implementation. Teacher efforts to innovate should also be taken into consideration in teacher evaluation and teacher promotion:

First, teachers need pre-service and continuous in-service training. Second, they need to be given more freedom in decision making concerning their own classes and syllabus implementation. Teachers' activities outside class should be taken into consideration in assessing teachers in order to motivate them.

Teacher leaders explained the lack of professional learning opportunities by stating that it was not possible for them to get any form of professional development. This is especially the case either because there is no supervisor appointed in the area where they work, or their supervisors are kept away with extra tasks and roles.

Discussion and Implications

Perceptions Shape Practice

Related to perceptions of teacher leadership in the Moroccan context, analysis of findings revealed that some teacher leaders still hesitate to acknowledge their leadership. In other studies, however, all teacher leaders considered themselves as 'leaders' (Greenlee, 2007). Helterbran (2010, p. 363) provided an explanation for teachers' refusal to acknowledge their leadership. She argued that this hesitation might be caused by teacher beliefs such as '*I am just a teacher syndrome*'. According to Helterbran (2010, p. 366), teachers have no problem envisioning themselves as teacher leaders. However, they often '*tend to have great difficulty identifying themselves as leaders in their schools*'. Helterbran (2010) further explained that successive reforms might overwhelm teachers to the point that they might suspect a leadership opportunity presented to them as just another reason to extract more unpaid work from them. Hence, teachers might be discouraged from engaging in leadership practices.

Other studies linked teachers' hesitation to acknowledge leadership to the prevalence of egalitarian norms in schools (Murphy, 2005). These norms are based on the belief that all teachers are equal, and that there is no such a term as 'teacher leader'. Organisational factors related to school culture and the prevalent discourse in schools might also discourage teachers from taking the initiative to lead. Research shows that bureaucratic structures are still dormant in schools (Amghar, 2018; Greenlee, 2007). Within a such culture, only traditional hierarchical positional roles are recognised as 'leadership'. Teacher leadership roles often remain 'invisible' (Torrance et al., 2016, p. 47), unsupported, '*unrecognised and undervalued*' (Killion et al. 2016, p. 19). These findings show how context plays a huge role in how leadership is perceived and practiced. Perceptions of teacher leadership differ from one

context to another and might as well shape what becomes ‘leadership’ in a given context. This validates studies that argue that leadership is ‘contextually defined’ (Killion et al. 2016). Hence, teacher leadership needs to be nurtured and supported within schools and systems for teachers to feel empowered and encouraged to take the lead.

The Diversity and Complexity of Teacher Leadership

With regard to the practice of teacher leadership in the Moroccan context, analysis of results showed the diversity of leadership practice among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. They tend to exercise leadership at different levels: the classroom level, school level and also beyond their schools. Some of these leadership practices are self-initiated (leading projects at the class, school level, integrating information technology in class, joining PLCs, coaching students on different projects and activities). Other leadership practices depend much on the opportunities available for teachers (leading a PLC, engaging in action research). These opportunities are often facilitated through the support of other school leaders (supervisors, principals, etc.), or through policy initiatives (teacher coach, teacher mentor, master teacher). These findings corroborate existing research on teacher leadership, which sees leadership as practiced within the classroom and beyond (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). They also validate the research, which states that teacher leadership is exercised at different dimensions and spheres of practice (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012). These findings also confirm the idea that teacher leadership is mostly initiated by teachers themselves (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012).

Additionally, in this study, most teacher leaders were found to lead informally. Although formal leadership roles exist in the Moroccan educational system (Idelcadi et al., 2020), in this study, most of the teacher leadership roles are informal and initiated by teachers themselves. Their informal roles include introducing new innovative ideas into their classrooms, leading projects within their classes and beyond, coaching students and colleagues, building necessary relationships with other staff in school and reaching out to their community to find resources to implement their projects. These roles are similar to the existing teacher leader roles found in the literature (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). According to the literature, these roles may affect the educational systems more than formal roles (Leonard & Leonard, 1999).

Although the practice of teacher leadership in the Moroccan context is diverse and takes different forms, it has the same focus, which is the improvement of teaching and learning. All the Moroccan teacher leaders in this study shared that their primary motivation for engaging in different leadership practices was to make a difference in their students’ learning. All these projects were geared towards enhancing students’ language skills or leadership skills. These activities are also directly

related to students' learning. As a teacher leader stated, '*All these activities are student-centered. All efforts are geared to improve learning and achievement*'. These findings confirm previous studies on teacher leadership, which view teacher leadership as the exercise of influence for the improvement of teaching and learning (Collinson, 2012; Danielson, 2007; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Patterson & Patterson, 2004; Torrance et al., 2016; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Analysis of findings from this research also showed that when teachers work in an environment where they enjoy more professional autonomy, they are willing to take the initiative and engage in leadership practices. However, when teachers feel their leadership is constrained either by conditions or by other leaders, they may not be encouraged to engage in leadership practice. The importance of professional autonomy was highlighted in previous research. Professional autonomy is crucial to pedagogical and curriculum innovation (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). With regard to leading class and school projects, coaching students in clubs and being part of a PLC, Moroccan ELT teachers enjoy greater autonomy when it comes to the choice of activities, devising an action plan, or setting up a school club. However, teacher leaders demand more professional autonomy when it comes to curriculum innovation and syllabus implementation. These findings indicate the importance of school culture and school & district leadership for the growth and sustainability to teacher leadership. Teacher leadership in schools depends much on school culture and the support systems teachers are provided. Teachers need to be encouraged to lead and develop creative solutions in their classrooms and schools. Teacher leaders can impact school culture positively through innovation and creativity in practice. However, they might also be shaped by their school culture if their autonomy and initiative are stifled and restricted by a prescriptive curriculum.

Analysis of findings further revealed that teacher leaders reported limited engagement in action research and in leading or co-leading a professional learning community in comparison with other leadership practices. To engage in action research or any other form of inquiry and to serve as a leader of a professional learning community often necessitates the support of other leaders in the school or district leaders. Previous studies stressed the importance of action research as a form of professional development for teachers (Bouziane, 2019). In Morocco, although teacher pre-service training involves training ELT teachers on action research, teachers tend to ignore this practice as soon as they join the classrooms. Hence, teacher engagement in leading inquiry or in leading a professional community depends on how much support they are provided with to venture into these leadership practices. School or district leaders need to provide teachers with opportunities for leadership and opportunities to engage in leading inquiry-based projects. Prior research has also highlighted the importance of engaging teachers in inquiry about issues related to their practice (Lambert, 2003). It also stressed the importance of providing teachers with formal structures to engage in collaboration and inquiry and to grow as leaders (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

The Interdependency of Leading and Learning

In this study, teacher leadership is found to enhance teacher learning and professional growth. As teachers lead, they are also likely to learn from their leadership practice. As they experiment with new activities, lead different projects and take the initiative for their professional learning, they also learn from these different sources of learning. These findings align with the existing literature on teacher leadership, which refers to the connection between leading and learning (Barth, 2001; Collinson, 2012; Lambert, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Therefore, Moroccan schools and students would benefit from engaging more teachers in leadership practice, especially if this practice is focused on the improvement of teaching and learning. These forms of learning could be much more effective than the 'sporadic', 'one-shot' workshops that teachers are often provided with for their professional development. It can be argued then that as teachers invest in students learning, they also invest in their own professional learning. Similarly as they lead different projects, they also learn to lead. So, their leadership emerges from practice.

Additionally, analysis of results showed the importance of teacher reflection, collaboration and community for the growth of teacher leadership and teacher professional learning. In this study, reflection, collaboration and community were highlighted by most ELT teacher leaders. Most Moroccan teacher leaders in this study are members of educational NGOs and professional communities, which provide them with alternative sources of learning and spaces for leadership practice. These findings confirm previous research that highlights the importance of reflection, community and collaboration for teacher professional learning (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Lambert, 2003). These forms of learning prove to be much more beneficial for teacher learning than professional development programs that have no relation to teachers' context or to the issues teachers struggle with on a daily basis. However, analysis of results also showed that collecting feedback from students and using it to inform practice and plan action is only moderately practiced by Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. This could be a missed learning opportunity for both students and teachers. Collecting feedback can be an important source of assessment for learning and could help students reflect on their learning and encourage teachers to reflect on their practice. Thus, teachers need to be trained to collect feedback in a structured way. They also need to be provided for structured collaboration, reflection and inquiry for deep learning to take place (Danielson & McGreal, 2000).

Leadership Learning Opportunities

In relation to professional learning and leadership opportunities provided for teachers, analysis of findings revealed that opportunities for in-service professional learning and for leadership are often limited. In Morocco, the provision of teacher

professional learning is part of the role of ELT supervisors. However, providing adequate continuous professional development proves to be challenging. Given the different roles and responsibilities that supervisors are often loaded with, there is less time left to devote to teacher professional development. As a consequence, sometimes all that teachers could be provided with are workshops, professional and pedagogical meetings, and demonstration lessons that take place sporadically. Previous research shows that traditional delivery of professional development through ‘one-shot’, ‘sit and get’ workshops is not really effective in ensuring deep learning (Butler et al., 2015; Fullan, 2008; Kennedy, 2005). The challenge is that even when a professional development session is scheduled for teachers, it can be postponed or cancelled, just because an urgent matter is coming from the top. These challenges to the provision of teacher professional learning by supervisors were previously highlighted in research on teacher professional development. According to Hassim (2019, p. 61):

Unfortunately, CPD in our Moroccan context is very much neglected. There are so many teachers who have not gone through any in-service training for so long and there are teachers who have not had one since they have graduated and started work. Our strong belief is that CPD is a must and we have to find ways how to provide quality CPD. I do not imagine supervisors and teachers without in-service training. In Morocco, supervisors are frequently taken away from in-service teacher training and professional development by certain administrative and emergency tasks like exams, teacher certification, school audits ...

Though professional learning and leadership opportunities are limited, Moroccan ELT teachers tend to benefit from learning opportunities provided by educational NGOs. In Morocco, educational NGOs play an important role in teacher professional learning and development (Mellouk, 2019). However, as findings from this study indicate, only some teacher leaders volunteer to share their expertise with colleagues in NGO spaces. Several reasons might explain these findings. The first reason concerns the professional development delivery mode. Most of the time, teachers are provided with professional development through ‘sit and get’ workshops with few opportunities to share their work. Second, it is quite likely that they have not been encouraged or coached enough to share their work with their colleagues. Third, it is quite likely that because sharing expertise does not count in teacher evaluation system in Morocco, it is not given much importance. Evidence from research shows that teachers often do not record their participation in facilitating their colleagues’ professional development as it is not considered part of their evaluation (Danieslon & McGreal, 2000). Having limited opportunities to share their work might be another missed opportunity because teachers are likely to learn from each other as much as they might learn from expert-facilitated workshops.

Formal opportunities to coach and mentor colleagues exist in the Moroccan system (Idelcadi et al., 2020). Teachers can apply for the leadership role of a teacher coach, teacher mentor or master teacher. However, these roles are constrained either because teacher leaders have to work ‘under the supervision of supervisors’ (Teacher Coach, M.N. 155, 2009a) or the roles are crippled by a lack of training and lack of incentives (Idelcadi, 2019). Sometimes role descriptions are similar to the role of supervisors, which creates role ambiguity (Murphy, 2005). In this study, analysis of

findings showed mixed views regarding opportunities teachers have for mentoring and coaching colleagues. This indicates that these practices are not common among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. The least reported practices concern peer observation and peer evaluation, which suggest that these leadership practices are also very limited among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. It is another missed opportunity for teachers to share their work and shape their colleagues' learning. Previous research shows that engaging in such activities might be constrained by role ambiguity, egalitarian norms and privatism, (Idelcadi, 2019; Murphy, 2005). Classrooms are not usually open spaces and classroom observation is usually part of the role of an ELT supervisor. Thus, teacher leaders will not venture into these practices unless they are invited, encouraged and empowered to do so. Therefore, coaching and mentoring colleagues, teacher collaboration, peer observation and peer evaluation are all practices that need to be supported and encouraged by other school and district leaders (supervisors). This requires a distributed form of leadership in schools and districts. Research shows that facilitating teacher leadership needs power sharing (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003). However, formal leaders are often unwilling to share leadership and relinquish power (Harris & Muijs, 2005).

Opportunities for participation in the decision-making process in Moroccan schools were reported as limited practices by teacher leaders. Although access to decision-making at the school level is available through different school councils (Idelcadi et al., 2020), only some teachers stated that they are effectively engaged in school councils. Evidence from document analysis and also from previous research reveals that there is no real participation in formal decision-making at the school level (Amghar, 2018; Idelcadi et al., 2020). The role of teachers in these councils is most of the time consultative rather than involving real access to decision-making in schools. Moreover, there is not much room for access to decision-making at the national level. This could be explained by the fact that the decision-making process at the national level is still confined to the top level of the educational hierarchy (Amghar, 2018; Ezzaki, 2011), apart from some consultation related to textbooks (Chaibi, 2019). ELT teacher leaders then remain often powerless because most of the decisions are made at the top level and teachers are only implementers of these policies. Hence, sometimes teachers refrain from implementing any innovation or any change dictated from the top because they feel there is no real participation in the making of those policies. Therefore, it is important to reconsider the role of teachers as leaders and as professionals who can contribute to school change. Teachers call for more opportunities for participation in the decision-making process both at the school level and at the national level so that they can 'own' the reforms instead of being mere implementers of top-down innovation.

Limitations

One of the first limitations of this research is that data were collected via self-report methodology (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Self-reports are based on perceptions of practice. As perception shapes practice and practice is shaped by perception, any study on views, attitudes, and behaviours holds limitations of being difficult to test or generalise. Another limitation relates to the difficulty of finding a suitable measurement for teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This is due to the ambiguity surrounding conceptualisation and the diversity of teacher leadership practices. This study also relied on both quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data helped gain insights into the experiences of the research participants. However, often findings cannot be generalised easily.

Conclusion and Implications

Previous research has highlighted the importance of teacher leadership for educational improvement (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Killion et al., 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher leadership is also found to enhance both student and teacher learning (Frost, 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). However, there is ambiguity surrounding ‘teacher leadership’ concept (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Torrance et al., 2016; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The fact that leadership is context-bound and that the roles of teacher leaders differ from one context to another makes it even more difficult to reach a consensus on what the term really means. Contributing to the literature that focuses on understanding the practice of teacher leadership, this study focuses on the practices of Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. It aimed at investigating the perceptions and practices of teacher leadership among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. There are four major important findings in this study which in turn yielded significant implications.

First of all, perceptions of teacher leadership among Moroccan ELT teacher leaders differ. Some tend to embrace their leadership roles and take initiative; others hesitate to acknowledge their leadership. This reflects the place of teacher leadership in the educational system as a whole. If teacher leadership was recognised and encouraged at the system level, teachers would not hesitate to refer to themselves as ‘leaders’. Therefore, there is a need for more support and encouragement of teacher leadership in schools and in the educational system. Teachers are key change agents, and ignoring their contribution to school change is likely to stifle leadership, creativity and innovation in schools.

Second, Moroccan ELT teacher leaders exercise leadership in multiple spheres. They lead different projects and activities in their classrooms, their schools and also

in their communities. This diversity of practice shows the ‘multidimensionality’ and ‘complexity’ of teacher leadership. This adds to the difficulty of conceptualising teacher leadership. However, consensus might be reached in relation to the focus of teacher leadership. All teacher efforts are geared towards providing better learning opportunities for their students. Because most of teacher leadership practice, as this study demonstrates, is informal and self-initiated, these initiatives and practices need to be recognised and encouraged by school and district leaders and policy makers. Teacher efforts also need to be taken into consideration in teacher evaluation and teacher promotion. On the other hand, teachers need to embrace their leadership role and look for more opportunities for professional growth through self-directed learning, joining communities of practice, and networking. It is also important that teachers make their work ‘visible’ through documenting it, engaging in inquiry and through sharing their work and expertise with colleagues either through blogging or in spaces provided by ELT supervisors or educational NGOs.

Third, this study has confirmed that learning and leading are interrelated and interdependent. There are several sources of professional learning and leadership practice for Moroccan ELT teacher leaders. As teacher leaders engage in different projects and leadership practices, they also likely to learn from practice. Their leadership is likely to emerge from practice and interacting with colleagues. The implication is that traditional professional development delivery modes that involve ‘sit and get’ workshops are not effective for teacher learning. Teachers need adequate learning opportunities that contribute to their growth as professionals and as leaders. These learning opportunities involve teacher collaboration, inquiry-based projects, practitioner research, professional communities and reflection on practice. Professional development sessions should also be continuous rather than sporadic. Moreover, leadership should be viewed as not limited to individual traditional legitimate leaders in schools (principals, supervisors). Rather, it needs to be nurtured as a collective endeavour where everyone is invited to contribute to school improvement.

Fourth, this study has shown how access to formal leadership opportunities can be restrained if not coupled with adequate training. The success of leadership roles is also dependent on the support of other leaders in the system (principals, supervisors and district leaders and policy makers). It is not enough to create formal roles for teachers. They need to be provided with enough resources, better working conditions, incentives and rewards. School leadership should create an optimal culture in schools where teacher leadership can be nurtured and developed. In order to develop and sustain teacher leadership, teachers need more structured opportunities for leadership development. This will necessitate a radical shift on how leadership is understood in schools and at the system level. It requires power sharing, which is not always an easy endeavour. Teachers are professionals with tremendous leadership potential. However, without policy initiatives to nurture and support their leadership, teacher individual initiatives might be stifled and may not be sustained. More research is needed to understand the practice of teacher leadership in different contexts and its impact on teacher leaders and on schools. Future research might also help in understanding perspectives of teacher leaders on how they grow as leaders

and how they navigate the different challenges that are often part of the complexity of teaching and learning.

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Chapter 12

Moving Teacher Leaders to the Front Line of School Improvement: Lessons Learned by One Australian Research and Development Team



Joan M. Conway  and Dorothy Andrews 

Abstract This chapter presents the work of the Leadership Research International (LRI) team at the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ), Australia, with a deliberate focus on placing teacher professionals at the forefront of school improvement initiatives. This action emerged from early LRI research findings in Australian projects identifying factors contributing to school effectiveness. Findings of the 1990s, followed by field-based research from 2000 to 2002, established the importance of teacher leaders influencing beyond the classroom working closely with principals to enhance student-learning outcomes. Two decades of research and development by the LRI_UniSQ have continued to strengthen the earlier published teacher leadership framework and a concept of whole school leadership termed Parallel Leadership for school improvement. Research that is more recent has raised questions about sustaining the role of teacher leaders, especially their informal role in schools. It has also become obvious that the sustainability of action depends on the capacity of the principal and systems to sustain processes within schools to enable teacher leaders to thrive.

Findings from current LRI_UniSQ research highlight a movement toward a structural response to the phenomenon of teacher leadership. We posit that, more than ever before, teacher leadership through principled action needs to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults. This calls for an urgent need to reinvigorate the organic nature of teacher leadership and embrace the importance of advocating and providing agency for teachers leading beyond the classroom.

Keywords Teacher leadership · School improvement · Educational leadership · Research and development

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Introduction

This chapter traces the cumulative development of the concept of teacher leadership as captured in longitudinal research and development conducted by researchers from the Leadership Research International (LRI) team at the University of Southern Queensland (UniSQ), Australia. By focusing on leadership for school improvement, our attention was drawn to the growing expertise and influence teachers were having on improving student outcomes. From this early research, we observed growing expertise emanating from emerging teacher professionals in providing advice and advocacy and creating innovative practices that were leading changes in school practices. Our observations were that these were the teachers taking deliberate responsibility for their continual professional learning by engaging in formal post-graduate qualifications and/or pursuing other avenues for certified recognition and praxis of their professional growth. However, within the school their leadership was not always acknowledged by either themselves or the broader community—there was no cultural norm that operationalized teachers as leaders. For this reason, our research-informed development in school improvement deliberately placed teachers at the forefront of school improvement initiatives. Our research has followed the development and informed refinement of development processes for school revitalization (improvement).

The Early Research—1995–1999

The research began in disadvantaged communities in Queensland (Crowther & Olsen, 1996), focusing on exploring the reasons for the success stories reported by principals and their communities in socioeconomic disadvantaged communities. The research objectives were to explore processes of effective leadership in socio-disadvantaged school communities; identify individual and situational characteristics contributing to effective leadership in these contexts; and develop a framework for leadership development for these contexts. The successes related to those actions were the result of classroom teachers operating in challenging circumstances, such as rural isolation, areas with high levels of unemployment, cultural conflict, and serious prejudice. The research of Crowther and Olsen sought to explore the characteristics of the work of classroom teachers who had achieved notable success and influence in working in these contexts and whether particular forms of leadership, if any, were inherent in those characteristics. The findings, published in Crowther (1996) and Crowther and Olsen (1996), presented a preliminary teachers-as-leaders framework that identified five leadership characteristics related to leadership in socio-disadvantaged communities. These characteristics were as follows: articulating a clear view of a better world; modeling sincerity and trust; confronting structural barriers; building networks of support; and nurturing a culture of success (Crowther & Olsen, 1996, p. 8). They also proposed a preliminary definition of teacher leadership that incorporated these characteristics and actions:

Teacher leadership ... is essentially an ethical stance that is based upon views of a better world and the power of teaching to shape meaningful systems. It manifests in actions that involve the wider school community and leads to the creation of ideas that will enhance the quality of life of the community in the long term. It reaches its potential in contexts where system and school structures are facilitative and supportive. (p. 32)

Informing literature at that time emerged from studies in American education reform where leadership appeared as a function of teachers' work such as collegial activity, mentoring, and coaching; leading professional development; school decision making; and school-based teams (Berry & Ginsberg, 1990; Dalton & Boyd, 1991; Lee & Smith, 1994; Lieberman et al., 1988; Smylie & Denny 1990) and Sergiovanni (1992) commented on teachers having a moral obligation to share with others. Furthermore, Australian policy acknowledging the potential for teacher leadership with Advanced Skills Teacher awards (AST) did provide opportunities for acknowledgment but faced difficulties associated with the classification influenced by school culture and industrial issues (Chadbourne & Ingvarson, 1991; Crowther & Gaffney, 1993).

Given the preliminary development of a "Teachers as Leaders Framework" in 1997, Crowther (see Crowther et al., 2002, p. 129) continued research in six schools in Queensland that had been designated as disadvantaged. Informing authoritative research at that time came from the work of Fred Newmann and the CORS (Centre on Organization and Restructuring of Schools) (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995) team of researchers in America who acknowledged the collaborative efforts of teachers working in professional learning communities (Hord, 1997; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Louis et al., 1996; Newman & Wehlage, 1995). The LRI research built on the success of this research and aimed to validate the Teacher Leader suggested framework. The participant schools were reported by the system to have implemented innovative practices such as the development of a vocational education program and the establishment of an alternative campus for street kids, together with a cultural-literacy program. Research included on-site visits, focus teams, and post-research analysis and synthesis of outcomes by the research team followed by validation of the outcomes with participants. The outcomes of this research confirmed the framework and added additional dimensions. The outcomes also raised questions about the relationship between teacher leaders and the principal regarding their contribution to school outcomes. The Teachers as Leaders framework was refined and published in Crowther et al. (2002, pp. 4–5) and is reproduced in Table 12.1.

Foundation Years 1999–2008

Three major research projects during this period provided the foundation for consolidating our understanding of the Teacher Leader's role in whole school reform. The first was involvement in the Innovation and Best Practices Project (IBPP), a research project led by Professor Peter Cuttance, the outcomes of which were published in "School innovation: Pathway to the knowledge society" (Cuttance, 2001).

Table 12.1 Teacher leaders framework

| Teacher leaders |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Convey convictions about a better world by</i> |
| Articulating a positive future for students |
| Showing a genuine interest in students' lives |
| Contributing to an image of teachers as professionals who make a difference |
| Gaining respect and trust in the broader community |
| Demonstrating tolerance and reasonableness in difficult situations |
| <i>Strive for authenticity in their teaching, learning, and assessment practices by</i> |
| Creating learning experiences related to students' needs |
| Connecting teaching, learning, and assessment to students' futures |
| Seeking deep understanding of tacit teaching and learning processes |
| Valuing teaching as a key profession in shaping meaning systems |
| <i>Facilitate communities of learning through organizationwide processes by</i> |
| Encouraging a shared, schoolwide approach to pedagogy (teaching, learning, and assessment) |
| Approaching professional learning as consciousness raising about complex issues |
| Facilitating understanding across diverse groups while also respecting individual differences |
| Synthesizing new ideas out of colleagues' dialogue and activities |
| <i>Confront barriers in the school's culture and structures by</i> |
| Testing the boundaries rather than accepting the status quo |
| Engaging administrators as potential sources of assistance and advocacy |
| Accessing political processes in and out of the school |
| Standing up for children, especially marginalized or disadvantaged individuals or groups |
| <i>Translate ideas into systems of action by</i> |
| Organizing complex tasks effectively |
| Maintaining focus on issues of importance |
| Nurturing networks of support |
| Managing issues of time and pressure through priority setting |
| <i>Nurture a culture of success by</i> |
| Acting on opportunities for others to gain success and recognition |
| Adopting a no-blame attitude when things go wrong |
| Creating a sense of community identity and pride |

Note: From Crowther et al. (2002). Copyright 2002 by Corwin Press, Inc.

This project was funded by the Australian Government and one of the largest educational research projects undertaken in Australia, involving 107 schools in all states in Australia. Each school researched and reported innovative practices designed and implemented to improve student learning. A full outline of the project outcomes was reported in Cuttance (2001) and a precis in Crowther et al. (2009). The LRI focused on the roles played by individuals and teams in bringing about documented reported success in student outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

Findings from the study (Crowther et al., 2001, cited in Cuttance, 2001, pp. 123–142) established the role of teacher leaders in school innovation as they worked in relationship with their principal. This leadership relationship was called Parallel Leadership and was captured in a figure that related school-based leadership and enhanced school innovation (see Fig. 12.1) and defined as “teacher leaders and administrator leaders in collaborative action, while at the same time encouraging the fulfillment of their individual capabilities, aspirations and responsibilities” (p. 141). Crowther concluded,

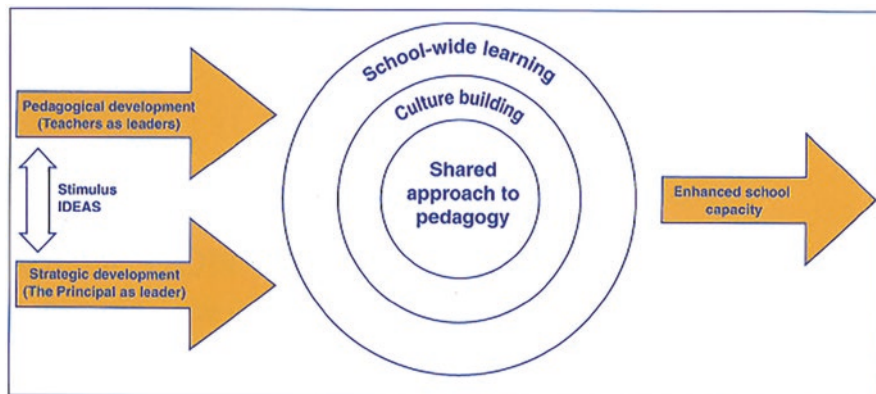


Fig. 12.1 Inside the black box: school-based leadership and enhanced school innovation. (Note: From Cuttance, 2001. Copyright 2001 by the Commonwealth of Australia)

School leadership development should be approached as multidimensional, encompassing the processes of school-wide learning, culture-building and creation of school-wide pedagogy, and focusing on the mutualistic relationships of principal-leaders and teacher-leaders in these processes. The educational leadership literature ... for the most part continues to manifest an obsession with positional authority ... The outcomes of [this] research ... suggest that serious overhaul is overdue. (p. 141)

As a result of these findings, the LRI as a research and development team, led by Frank Crowther, developed a whole school improvement initiative. The project was deliberately designed to place teacher leadership as an important leadership component in enhancing school revitalization (improvement). This initiative, called “Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in Schools” (IDEAS) (Andrews et al., 2004; IDEAS, n.d.) provided enabling processes for opening space and agency for teachers in leading and managing in concert with the principal. This development project engaged Queensland school-based teams of teachers and their principals and University researchers, Crowther, Andrews, and Lewis to lead a school revitalization (improvement) project. The initial findings of the 1-year project (Andrews, 1999) led to encouraging further engagement with schools in the Murrumba Downs region of Queensland. This engagement formed the context for the second major research project—ARC (Australian Research Council) grant (2001–2004).

The ARC Project

The aim of this research study, “From conceptual frameworks to improved school practice: exploring DETYA [Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs] Innovations and Best Practice Project outcomes in Queensland State Schools” (Crowther et al., 2004), was to test the validity of the model (see Fig. 12.1). The

research design study replicated the earlier Cuttance school effectiveness study, where schools identified as achieving enhanced school outcomes were then followed up with in-school visits from external researchers. Data were collected using the backward mapping processes (Padilla et al., 1996). The emerging model focused on capturing school improvement processes that had contributed to enhanced school outcomes and the contribution of leadership in relation to supporting these processes.

The Queensland schools studied had engaged with IDEAS, a whole school revitalization project, which enabled teacher leaders to be actively engaged with their principal in developing and clarifying direction through a collaboratively-developed vision, a shared understanding of related pedagogy, holistic professional learning, and aligned infrastructures. The outcomes of the ARC grant were as follows:

1. A refinement of the school improvement model (see Fig. 12.1) that highlighted (a) the importance of the context; (b) a process for implementation; and (c) the importance of enhanced alignment of school elements and heightened student and teacher support, which results in sustainable capacity for improvement (see Fig. 12.2).

This conceptualization was then strengthened by a clear definition of teacher leadership:

Teacher leadership is essentially an ethical stance that is based upon views of both a better world and the power of teachers to shape meaningful systems. It manifests itself in new forms of understanding and practice that contribute to school success and to the quality of life of the community in the long term. (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 10)

2. Formal adoption of the Teachers as Leaders Framework (see Table 12.1). However, it was emphasized that teacher leaders did not necessarily action all aspects of the framework, but rather their action depended on the context in which they operationalized their action.
3. Strengthening of the Leadership concept of Parallel Leadership (Andrews & Crowther, 2002; Crowther, 2002): “Parallel Leadership is a process of teacher



Fig. 12.2 Successful school revitalization: the IDEAS way. (Note: From Crowther et al., 2004. Copyright 2004 by the University of Southern Queensland, Leadership Research Institute)

leaders and their principals engaging in collective action to build capacity. It embodies mutualism, shared purpose and respect for individual expression and contribution” (Crowther, 2002, p. 169). Teacher leader action was identified as pedagogical and principal leader action focused on metastrategy.

4. Development of an understanding of teacher leaders as knowledge creators leading professional learning communities (Andrews & Lewis, 2000, 2004) with the power of collective action—collective intelligence later published by Conway (2008).
5. A new image of teacher professionals enacting the 3-D.P (Three-Dimensional Pedagogy) model (Andrews & Crowther, 2003, p. 102) was later enhanced by Conway and Andrews (2016) (see Fig. 12.3).

Of particular interest emerging from this study was the research of a doctoral student attached to the ARC SPIRT grant. Joan Conway focused on the dynamics of how teachers who are engaged in a process of successful development create new knowledge and make new meaning. New meaning represented new contextualized shared pedagogical frameworks. What emerged from her studies (Conway, 2008) was not only the dynamics of knowledge creation but also a “new image of the

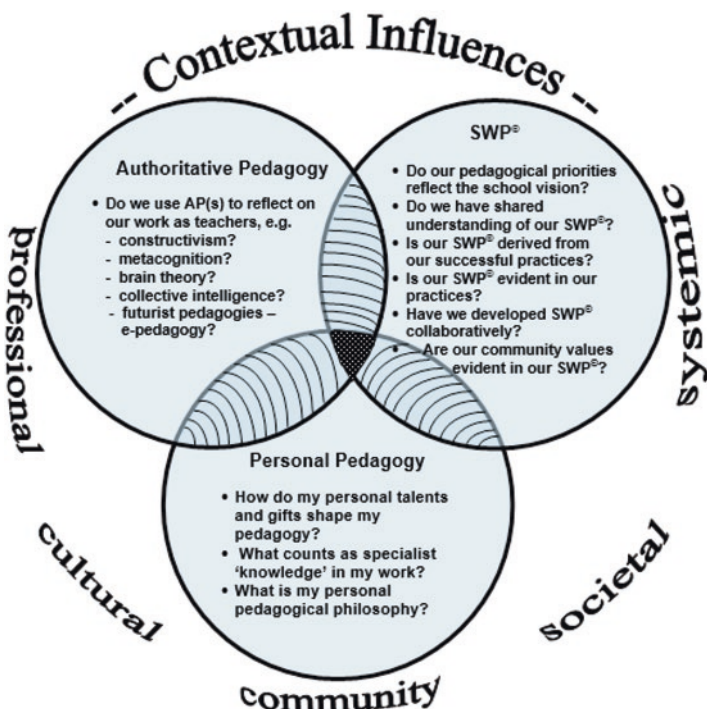


Fig. 12.3 3-D.P—three-dimensional pedagogy. (Note: From Conway and Andrews, 2016. Copyright 2015 by Springer; *Special note*: SWP is the acronym for Schoolwide Pedagogy, a part of the 3-D.P, and a unique construction by each school adhering to the specified criteria engaged in the IDEAS project Crowther et al., 2013, pp. 4–25)

professional teacher” (p. 235). Conway suggested a new framework for teacher professionalism that incorporates meta-thinking and involves the following:

- A shift in the mindsets about thinking and acting with particular emphasis on collaboration.
- The explicit recognition of the capabilities of teachers to contribute to the formation of new meaning.
- The application of self-critical reflection, with particular consciousness of presuppositions.
- The use of visual and metaphorical representations of shared understandings (p. 235).

These findings gave greater clarity to our understanding of the image of the 3-D.P teacher.

Evaluation of the National Trial of IDEAS

As the ARC-SPIRT research ended, another associated 1-year project commenced in 2003. This was a National Trial of IDEAS funded by the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). The 1-year trial spanned three states and involved four schools in each state. The schools were a mix of State and Catholic system schools. The trial considered the impact of IDEAS on teacher morale and professionalism, student outcomes, and school-based leadership. The evaluation of this national trial of IDEAS (Chesterton & Duignan, 2004) concluded that engagement with a teacher-principal-led revitalization process had positive impacts on teachers:

... in terms of promoting pedagogical reflection and discussion, increasing collaboration, increasing involvement in decision-making, [and] improvements in teacher morale ... [the process] ... promotes a type of shared leadership that is suited to the professional needs of teachers and school leaders who are expected to produce graduates to serve the emerging knowledge society of the 21st century. (pp. 67–68)

The importance of culture building was emphasized as it relates to the emergence of teachers working together to take collaborative action. This moved teachers from individual to collaborative action, where working in a professional community enabled their collective intelligence to create new knowledge, which the LRI called Vision and Schoolwide Pedagogy (SWP). In addition, there was an acknowledgment of teacher leaders as a school phenomenon, where leadership was no longer the province of the principal alone. As Chesterton and Duignan (2004) commented, where teachers were enabled to contribute to successful whole school reform, there was a need for “a considerable shift in the leadership paradigm of many of [the] schools” (p. 69).

Research 2008 Onward

Building on findings emerging from the ARC research, Evaluation of the National Trial of IDEAS, and doctoral studies theses (Conway, 2008; Lewis, 2003), the LRI research team began to focus on the contextual understanding, capacity building, and role of pedagogical teacher leaders in school improvement processes. These processes used by schools were within the IDEAS project, which continued to be refined since its earlier inception. Embedded within the IDEAS project was the need for schools and systems to embrace changes—for culture building, collaborative action, and teacher-principal leadership relationships (Parallel Leadership). The focus of capacity-building processes and leadership responsibility was the aim of a mixed methods research study engaging the LRI_USQ team with 22 public schools in the Australian State of Victoria. The schools identified had engaged with whole school improvement processes for at least 3 years and had evidence of student success: “‘School success’ is defined as enhanced school outcomes in agreed high priority goal areas, based on documented evidence of those achievements and outcomes and teachers’ expressed confidence in their school’s capacity to extend and sustain student achievements into the future” (Andrews & LRI_USQ Research Team, 2009, p. 130). Furthermore, Fig. 12.4 captures the relationship between the process of enhanced alignment, heightened expectations, and sustainable capacity for improvement (refer to Fig. 12.2), resulting in leadership for successful capacity building.

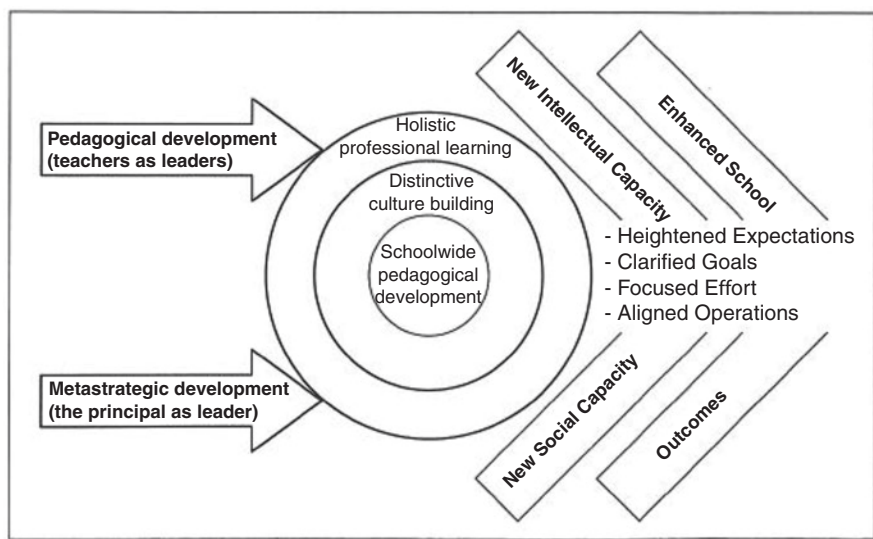


Fig. 12.4 Linking parallel leadership and successful capacity building. (Note: From Crowther et al., 2009. Copyright 2009 by Corwin Press)

An outcome of this research project was the C-B model featuring six dynamics as captured in an acronym, COSMIC (Committing to school revitalization, Organizational diagnosis and coherence, Seeking new heights, Micro-Pedagogical deepening, Invoking reaction, Consolidating success) (Crowther and Associates, 2011, p. 16). Furthermore, the findings of this research were published by Crowther and Associates (2011) and Conway and Andrews (2016) and highlighted the importance of a relational, mutualistic leadership contributing to school improvement and successful capacity building (C-B) for sustainability. The relational nature of this leadership captured in Fig. 12.5 emphasized the importance of teacher professionals throughout a capacity-building process, and the LRI_UniSQ research team concluded,

Successful capacity building ... is dependent on mature principal-teacher leadership capabilities and a relationship between principals and teachers that is mutually respectful and grounded in trust while also recognizing each party's special needs, personal characteristics, and role-related functions. (Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 164)

As Fig. 12.5 illustrates, the importance of teacher leaders cumulates in leading professional communities as they engage in pedagogical renewal and advocacy for renewal. The dynamic of micro-pedagogical deepening (a focus on individual and collective pedagogical inquiry and application) depended largely on teacher leaders

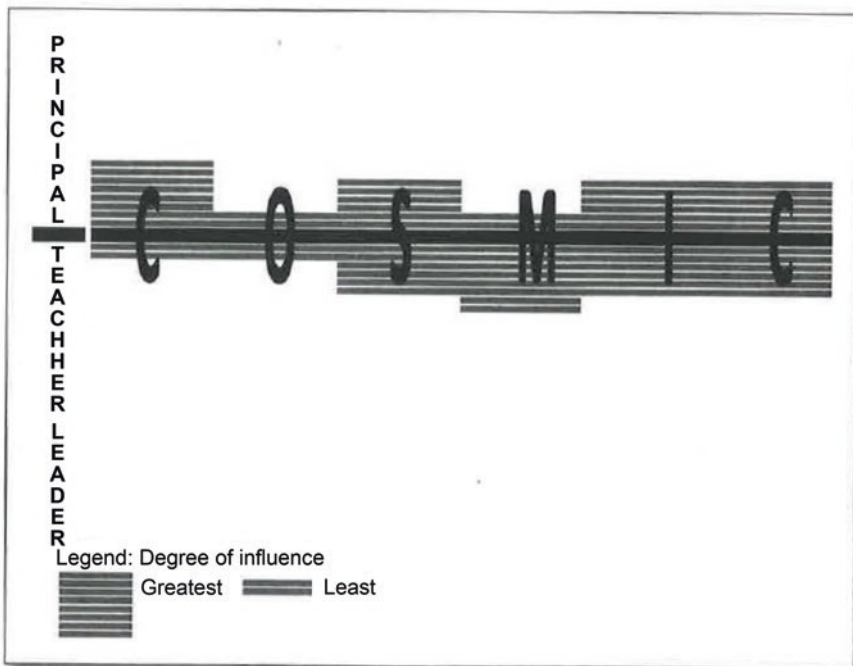


Fig. 12.5 Principal and teacher leader influences in capacity building. (Note: From Crowther & Associates, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Corwin <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452275321>)

working with the professional community as they enriched individual and collective pedagogical practices. We found that leadership for this dynamic required trust and belief in both teacher professionalism and teacher leadership and opened challenges for educational leadership thinking. There were three qualities (strategic, educative, intellectual) that needed to exist for this dynamic to be realized:

1. Strategic—mobilizing professional learning experiences that enable unique practice to occur.
2. Educative (advocacy)—an honest search for personal values, gifts, and talents in personal and schoolwide practices.
3. Intellectual—refining individual school-based knowledge (extracts from Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 101).

Furthermore, during the Invoking reaction dynamic of C-B, an emerging maturity of the teacher leader–principal parallel leader relationship was evidenced by three dynamics:

1. Organizationwide—mobilization of networks and forums to garner double-loop reaction to school-created pedagogical knowledge.
2. Strategic—utilization of double-loop feedback in ongoing pedagogical development.
3. Educative (advocacy)—promotion of the construct of teacher leaders in public forums and with systems’ officials (Crowther & Associates, 2011, p. 127).

For teachers, leadership actions evidenced self-confidence and a sense of empowerment. In addition, leadership as an organizationwide quality was evident with teacher leaders and their principals working together to enhance the school’s capacity for ongoing improvement. These teacher leaders were noted as classroom teachers, middle level leaders, or assistant principals who enjoyed the full respect and confidence of their colleagues. The growing confidence of teacher leaders as professional knowledge advocates was captured in a paper by Petersen and Conway (2011), “I can see clearly now: Teacher leaders invoking reaction.”

However, while reports from these studies heralded the importance of teacher-principal leadership, doctoral studies focusing on teacher leadership were being reported. The first, a grounded theory study (Dawson, 2010), reported the experience of becoming a teacher leader. Dawson (2011) reported becoming a teacher leader and found that when experienced teachers (those with 8 or more years of experience) were provided with leadership opportunities and an explicit leadership framework, they were able to learn, adapt, and begin to incorporate leadership roles into their perceptions of their work as teachers. He also reported that “when the principal legitimated the teacher leadership framework throughout the school, the enhanced clarity around the role of teacher leaders proved beneficial to the acceptance of emerging teacher leaders and their work” (p. 16). The support and actions of the principal in developing teachers as leaders have been often reported (see Barth, 2001).

The other doctoral work (Petersen, 2016), “When the sleeping giant awakes: The lived experiences of teacher leaders and implications for schools and education

systems”, explored the longer-term experiences of teachers who had once led whole school improvement (IDEAS) in their school. The definition of teacher leader that was used in this study was based on teachers who had led within the school and beyond the classroom. These teacher leaders related their “lived experience” after the project had been completed. Their experiences were varied and were captured in five categories of teacher leaders: The Strategic Career Movers, The Culture Guardians, The Realists, The Battle-Scarred Warriors, and The Dream Believers. Petersen (2015) found that

Of the five groups, only two were able to fulfil their potential and sustain their images of themselves as teacher leaders in their current post-IDEAS contexts – *The Strategic Career Movers* and *The Culture Guardians*. *The Realists*, *The Battle-Scarred Warriors* and *The Dream Believers* remain unfulfilled, with the latter category leaving the education system in search of their own dream to fulfil their potential. (p. 6)

The Culture Guardians remained in their school and continued to receive support and resourcing from the principal and “organisational structures at the system and school level incorporated space for internal and external networking, contextual school-based professional learning and professional conversations to occur” (Petersen, 2015, p. 8). The Strategic Career Movers strategically relocated to other schools or contexts to further their career and grow their teacher-leader potential. This awakening had opened a new career path into a formal leadership role, and moving context made that possible. The Dream Believers created a new future for themselves by leaving the school context when circumstances changed, such as in the case of a change in principal and top-down leadership reinstated, resulting in the loss of opportunity to grow their capacity as teacher leaders. The Battle-Scarred Warriors were those who had experienced in-school changes as the Dream Believers but had remained in the school to continue to “fight the battle,” usually with a strong moral purpose (standing up for students). However, they were left “battle-scarred” and no longer able to sustain their actions. The Realists had similar experiences but had accepted the change and retreated to their classrooms. As Petersen (2015) reflected,

Sustaining a culture with staff turnover, in particular [the principal] ... was problematic ... [however, where the school improvement remained a collective effort] teacher leaders engaged collectively ... [and] used their skills, attributes and capabilities ... to implement change processes. ... [Further,] ... leadership in these schools was a capacity building process and shared at all levels in the school. (p. 19)

The Teacher Leader Capacity Building Model developed by Petersen (2015, p. 27) emphasized three interrelated dimensions: collective intelligence—focused on collective engagement to achieve organizationwide solutions for the evolvment of new pedagogical knowledge; collaborative—grounded in a belief that capacity building is a socially interdependent and collaborative effort; and personal—grounded in one’s talents and capabilities and what one thinks and feels about being a teacher leader. It was concluded that all three dimensions provide teachers with professional agency and the power to act as a teacher leader given the context where leadership is viewed as an organizationwide action.

From 2015 Till Now

Research findings related by the LRI_UniSQ research team into school improvement processes—Crowther et al. (2013), Conway and Andrews (2016), Andrews et al. (2017), Conway and Andrews (2019), and Andrews and Conway (2020)—all reported similar experiences. The research design for these studies included a mixture of mixed methods and case study approaches and included an external validator or validation team. In addition, there was a growing realization by the LRI_USQ team members that schools are not islands and system support was needed in acknowledging school prioritized improvement, renewal of staff, and especially the change of the principal. Principal change often frustrated ongoing improvement rather than adding value to what was already happening in the school. This often happened where changes in organizational structures and cultural norms had occurred during school improvement processes and where teacher leaders had contributed significantly to overall school renewal. In the case study reported by Conway and Andrews (2016), we captured what we saw as teacher leader action, particularly related to pedagogical leadership (see Table 12.2). The successes reported in this paper were summarized as follows:

This professional community, led by their clear-sighted and committed principal, has responded to the specific learning needs of their diverse demographic enrolment and in so doing, been challenged to rethink and redevelop their pedagogy. Teacher leaders have risen to the challenge of creating new ways of thinking and acting in response to this challenge The meta-strategic leader has entrusted the creative expertise of teacher leaders with the responsibility for pedagogical development and implementation in response to specific student needs. (pp. 135–136)

Conway and Andrews (2016) concluded:

[W]e are more than ever convinced that teacher leaders and their principals must deliberate and strategise together for the provision of optimum arrangements and opportunities that lead pedagogical enhancement through a school wide approach. Moreover, teacher leaders and principals must work mutualistically developing a culture of relational trust and hope with an agreed school vision for leading pedagogical enhancement. (p. 137)

Table 12.2 Teachers as leaders in action

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teacher leaders |
| <i>Convey convictions about a better world</i> by articulating a positive future for all students |
| <i>Facilitate communities of learning</i> by encouraging a shared, schoolwide approach to core pedagogical processes |
| <i>Strive for pedagogical excellence</i> by showing genuine interest in students' needs and well-being |
| <i>Confront barriers in the school's culture and structures</i> by standing up for children, especially disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and teams |
| <i>Translate ideas into sustainable systems of action</i> by internal and external networking |
| <i>Nurture a culture of success</i> by acting on opportunities to emphasize accomplishments and high expectations |

Note: From Conway and Andrews (2016). Copyright 2016 by Springer

Teacher Leadership Within the Australian Context

A recent document analysis conducted as a component of a broader study on Teacher Leadership (Kahler-Viene et al., 2021) traced evidence of official recognition of teacher leaders in the National, State, and Regional contexts in Australia (see Fig. 12.6), where each of the systems has policy and professional development responsibilities. The findings indicated a move toward formalizing roles and explicit expectations about actions.

At a National level, the reframing of what it means to be a teacher (National Standards for Teachers) (AITSL, 2017) provides acknowledgment that

- (a) Leadership is developed, shared, and spread throughout the school.
- (b) In the professional standards, teachers can be classified as “Highly accomplished and Lead”: These are those considered to be exemplary teachers as they contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching throughout the school. “Their influence reaches beyond the classroom, so ... build the capacity of others” (p. 13).

At a State level, for example, in Queensland, teachers can apply to be certified as “Highly Accomplished” and “Lead Teachers” providing they can produce documentary evidence to meet the criteria. More importantly at the Queensland State level, official documentation does acknowledge teacher leaders. However, enactment in practice is often actioned in a formal role. These roles are the following:

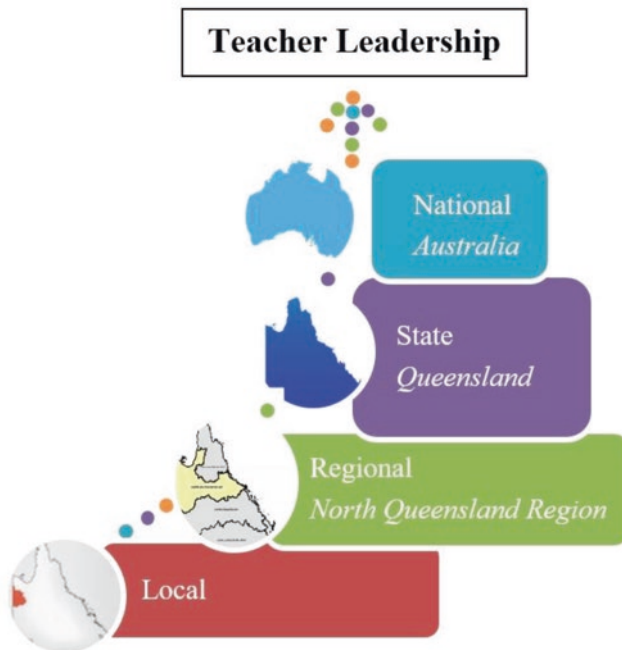


Fig. 12.6 The four administrative levels. (Note: From Kahler-Viene et al., 2021. Copyright 2021 by Research in Educational Administration and Leadership)

- (a) Senior Teacher commits to “teaching excellence and a leadership role amongst classroom teachers by performing higher level duties” (Department of Education, 2018b, p. 23) such as leading curriculum implementation, resource development, mentoring, modeling effective teaching strategies and classroom management, and supervising pre-service teachers.
- (b) An experienced senior teacher promotes “the professional standards and pedagogical expertise in a classroom environment through activities to develop the skills of others” (Department of Education, 2018a, p. 2).

Furthermore, at a Queensland Regional level, classroom teachers are often identified for their expertise and take on roles beyond the classroom, either within or across schools. These are formal positions, usually short term, which enable teachers to share expertise with others to enhance student learning outcomes. These include literacy and numeracy coaches, mentoring beginning teachers’ early years, pedagogical leaders, and focused curriculum implementation, such as STEM.

Findings from Kahler-Viene et al. (2021) indicated a focus on the formal position of teacher leadership with an emphasis across the systems on accountability. The movement to the formalization of teachers working outside the classroom was reflected in a recent paper, “School middle leadership: A systematic review” (Lipscombe et al., 2021). This paper drew attention to the messiness of classifying middle-level leaders and the confusion within the literature regarding middle-level leaders and teacher leaders. Many of the functions shared drew two distinctions:

- (a) Middle-level leaders have formal leadership roles (remunerated).
- (b) Middle-level leaders are accountable to others (principal, fellow teachers, students) for their roles.

Our recent observations see a definite movement toward teachers, once they “awaken” to leadership positions, seeking more formal roles through certification or through promotion within the organizational structure of schools. This is often reflected in an uptake of positions such as Head of Curriculum, Pedagogical Leadership, and Assistant Principal roles. This phenomenon results in the enhancement of leadership capacity within the school and within the system. However, based on more recent system-school research projects (Andrews et al., 2017; Conway & Andrews, 2019), we are finding that the recognition of a more organic form of whole-school leadership is rarely acknowledged in the longer term. The common downfall is often related to a change in leadership personnel in the school and the system without regard for organizational culture.

The richness of our research has to date culminated in a refined version of the Parallel Leadership model (see Fig. 12.7) with a strengthened definition to acknowledge the fluidity of roles in response to specific contextual needs:

Parallel Leadership is a multifaceted relationship developed between those who have defined leadership roles and those who emerge as leaders, together leading improvement with a clearly defined and mutually agreed visionary commitment to action, both within the school and between the school and the system. The relationship is built on action that is collaborative, collegial, and contextual. (Conway & Andrews, 2021)

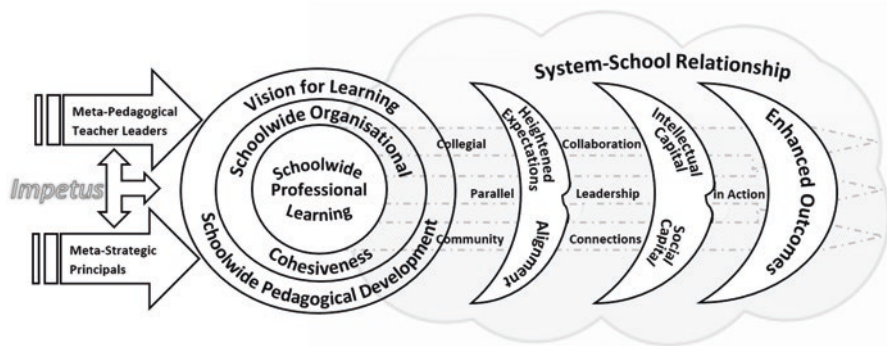


Fig. 12.7 Parallel leadership model for organizational alignment. (Note: Adapted from Andrews & LRI_USQ Research Team, 2009. Copyright 2009 by LRI_USQ)

Conclusion

The current exploration of leadership as an organizationwide phenomenon needs to reinvigorate the concept explored by Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) many years ago and embrace the importance of enacting the qualities and practices of teachers leading beyond the classroom. We advocate for a trusting relationship with the principal and teacher leaders within the school, working together on a mutually developed shared purpose, as the common practice within schools of the future. As Crowther et al. (2002) established, “[t]eacher leadership facilitates principled action to achieve whole school success. It applies the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth, and adults” (p. 10). We profess that the leadership capacity within schools should not be confined to those with formal positions—the culture of the teaching profession should embrace a more organic form of whole school leadership and utilize the capacity of those within the school to motivate and engage colleagues in ways that enhance the quality of school outcomes.

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Part III

Reflecting on Teacher Leadership

Things to Think About

The chapters in Part II of this book include detailed descriptions of teacher leadership in the context of a wide range of cultures and governance frameworks. They suggest that the term teacher leadership as a generic descriptor of how teachers influence may obscure important contextual differences. In fact, the widespread use of teacher leadership in the establishment of teaching standards and evaluation frameworks throughout Western nations has led to cross-cultural borrowing that, in some circumstances, informs policymakers and practitioners but, at other times, leads to inappropriate assumptions that do not reflect local conditions accurately.

In Part III, the lessons learned that are shared in Chap. 13 and the cautions and questions contained in Chap. 14 merit consideration in the development of teacher education and principal preparation programming. They also are worthy of the attention of policymakers and both formal and informal educational leaders. They add to the valuable accumulation of existing literature about related terms such as teacher leadership, shared leadership, and distributed leadership. The ISTL findings underscore the value of knowing that teacher leaders typically are characterized by social and political acumen, individual autonomy, altruistic values and beliefs, and the willingness to act. However, the ISTL findings also demonstrate that teacher leadership is challenging and that attaining contextualized school community goals is frequently not possible. Nonetheless, the uncertainty associated with successful, positive, and professional teacher leadership warrants ongoing study because of the benefits that may accrue.

Chapter 13

Lessons Learned from Voices Across the Globe



Charles F. Webber  and Dorothy Andrews 

Abstract This chapter summarizes the International Study of Teacher Leadership findings reported in the preceding chapters of this book. Key observations from all of the chapters were sorted into categories that highlight important understandings about teacher leadership in international contexts. The result is a narrative that tells the cross-cultural story of teacher leadership as collectively observed by the ISTL research team. The narrative reflects differences among research sites, including languages, histories, social conditions, religions, and economic factors, in the status of the teaching profession. It also recognizes that teacher leadership remains largely undefined and that there continues to be a dearth of research that definitively connects teacher leadership with improved student achievement even though it can be reasonably argued that teacher participation in school improvement initiatives will facilitate improved conditions for teaching and learning.

The chapter describes how teacher leaders exercise influence in their school communities by participating in teamwork with colleagues, parents, and community members. They also collaborate with the development of schoolwide shared visions and instructional goals. It also shares some of the complexities associated with teacher leadership such as the challenges associated with traditional expectations for schooling, evolving responsibilities for teachers, and difficult social issues. The chapter also discusses how teachers at all career stages have the potential to be influencers, with implications for career-long formal and informal professional development.

The benefits of teacher leadership are outlined relative to their roles in the sustenance of schoolwide pedagogies, instructional improvement, and relational and mutualistic leadership. The contextual factors that support teacher leadership are

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presented, such as the need for school improvement to be coherent with local cultures and the value of the professional identities of individual teachers as organizational change agents. Cautions about the cross-cultural borrowing of teacher leadership are outlined because of differences across cultures in teacher certification, expectations for schools, and teaching standards.

Factors that support teacher leadership are outlined. For example, school community readiness for teacher leadership, system support, and the development of professional learning communities all contribute to the success of teacher leadership. Attributes that reduce the likelihood that teacher leadership will succeed include principals' unfamiliarity with teacher leadership, legacies of autocratic leadership, and contextual limitations.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Cross-cultural leadership · Teacher influence · Educational context

Introduction

The *International Study of Teacher Leadership* (ISTL) was the initiative of university academics from across the world who came together with interest in teacher leadership and made a commitment to explore the relevance of this concept within their contexts. The primary research question for the study was to explore how teacher leadership is conceptualized and enacted and what are the implications for educational stakeholders?" The authors of the chapters in this book addressed this question by reviewing relevant literature, sharing their understanding of teacher leadership, conducting document analyses, administering surveys, interviewing teachers identified as leaders in their communities, and conducting action research. Each chapter offers insights into the international articulation of the dimensions of teacher leadership.

This chapter now offers a summary of the previous chapters authored by researchers from Colombia, Spain, Tanzania, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Mexico, Morocco, and Argentina who wrote the earlier chapters in this book. The summary is the result of gleaning key observations from each chapter and sorting them into categories that highlight important understandings, some of which are not new and have been featured in earlier research reports and some that enrich the teacher leadership literature. The categories are presented as a narrative intended to tell the cross-cultural story of teacher leadership as collectively observed by the ISTL research team.

The first section in this chapter is a description of how the ISTL authors collectively underscored why teacher leadership merits ongoing attention by researchers, followed by an overview of how teacher leaders may exercise influence in their respective school communities. Next, the complexities of leading are outlined, and then an explanation is provided of how teachers can learn about leadership. The

potential benefits of teacher leadership are explored, along with an explanation of how contextual factors may support teacher leadership and diminish its value to school communities. Then, the factors that make teacher leadership viable are juxtaposed with a portrayal of when teacher leadership simply may not be viable. The chapter will close by sharing challenges and opportunities related to teacher leadership (Fig. 13.1).

It is important to note that what follows is shared with the full understanding that a clear definition of teacher leadership continues to elude. However, ISTL findings to date suggest that it may be as or more productive to consider teacher leadership as a broad and flexible concept that indeed relates to the influence exercised by teachers but, equally important, to their overall success in facilitating student learning and contributing to the welfare of their school communities. Approaching teacher leadership from a pragmatic perspective like this does not diminish the value of teachers as leaders but in fact enhances it.



Fig. 13.1 Chapter overview

Why Teacher Leadership Merits Study

The value of teacher leadership has been debated in the research literature for the past several decades, with those arguing in its favor pointing to the appealing nature of the construct. For instance, teamwork and collaboration are described as central elements of teacher leadership, which, in turn, are said to lead to bonding and a sense of community. Moreover, collaboration is said to increase teacher satisfaction and lead to higher staff morale. In schools where teamwork is practiced, teachers are believed to be more innovative and demonstrate greater willingness to take risks with innovative forms of teaching. Teacher leaders are thought to engage more in reflective dialogue that clarifies assumptions and beliefs, resulting in greater self-awareness and stronger feelings of agency. Teacher leadership also appeals to the value of shared decision-making and replacing hierarchical governance structures with ones that are more collegial and democratic.

On the other hand, there are ubiquitous claims that teacher leadership remains undefined and that little or no research connects teacher leadership with improved student achievement. Furthermore, teacher leadership is said to have emerged primarily in Western nations and to assume that there is a common understanding of the concept that transcends borders and cultures. In fact, the explicit and implicit inclusion of teacher leadership in teaching standards in a variety of Western and non-Western countries suggests that its widespread use bears closer examination.

Cross-cultural borrowing of educational terms such as teacher leadership has the potential to lead to the exchange of substantive ideas and the cross-fertilization of policies that facilitate educative practices. Nonetheless, there also is agreement that important concepts such as power and authority are used and understood differently across cultural context. Levels of teacher influence vary according to the status of the teaching. Also, how leadership is understood and practiced varies according to social status, gender, and religion, so it is understandable that teacher leadership means different things to people in various cultures. Unfortunately, because the language associated with teacher leadership has permeated non-Western contexts, some educators and researchers have begun to ask, "Are we doing something wrong?" because they perceive the misalignment between what they hear about teacher leadership and their organizational and societal cultures. Another example of cultural misalignment may be perfunctory teacher participation in a hierarchical governance structure described as collaboration and evidence of teacher leadership.

It is a truism to say that the quality of teaching correlates with student learning, so it is unreasonable to argue against teacher participation in school improvement initiatives. Similarly, most members of school communities would agree that teachers have a strong influence on their students and, often, on colleagues and parents. Also, educational policies and curriculum designs are formulated with few calls for irrefutable research evidence of measurable improvements in student achievement. Furthermore, governance practices intended to enhance teacher satisfaction, commitment to students, and parental support are supported widely in the absence of causal relationships with student learning; they are supported because they are the

right thing to do. It is reasonable to employ multiple research methodologies to examine closely how teachers might strengthen their positive influences within their classrooms, schools, and communities.

What Teacher Leaders Do

The authors of the other chapters in this book highlight a wide range of ways that teachers demonstrate leadership within school communities (see Fig. 13.2). They shared that teacher leaders actively seek to participate in teamwork with colleagues, parents, and community members. They do so in authentic ways that minimize contrived participation. They look for opportunities to assist with establishing school-wide shared visions. They promote the development of common commitments to effective pedagogical practices. Teacher leaders seek professional dialogue with their peers and manifest appreciation for interdependency among school community members. In addition, they frequently lead work teams within the workplace, primarily because community members trust them and hold them in high regard.

As important as leadership behaviors are the values and beliefs that motivate teacher leaders and bolster their commitment to students and communities. Teacher leaders describe teaching as a mission, not a job. They are deeply committed to the principle of service to their educational communities and demonstrate strong moral

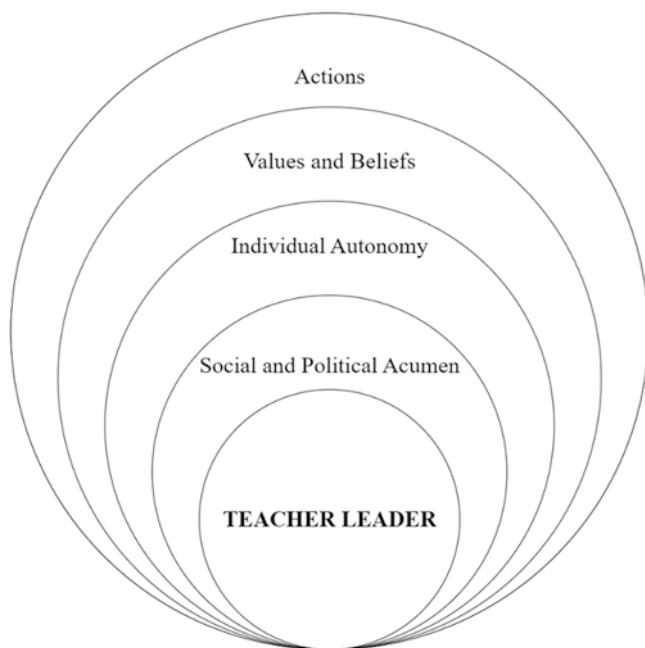


Fig. 13.2 Teacher leader profile

and professional beliefs. They believe firmly that teaching transforms lives and that they must provide supportive and empowering learning environments for learners and colleagues. Teacher leaders also accept personal responsibility and accountability for achieving their classroom and school goals. Teacher leaders' actions reflect their respect for human dignity and their desire to address injustices that impede students' learning both within the school community as well as beyond.

Their students and peers describe them as sincere and trustworthy, which, in turn, allows teacher leaders to build networks of relational trust and to maintain a culture of success in classrooms and schools.

Teacher leaders are characterized by high levels of individual autonomy. That is, they have a powerful sense of agency that allows them to innovate and take risks. They initiate practices that facilitate educational improvements for themselves and others. They value ongoing professional learning while concurrently understanding that action sometimes needs to be taken in the interests of school community members without prolonged waits for information gathering. Teacher leaders also manifest openness to innovative ideas and to organizational change, while demonstrating resilience when initiatives do not go according to plan.

Conceptualizations of teacher leadership shared in earlier chapters emphasize that while values and beliefs are essential elements, they are not sufficient on their own. Teacher leaders must also possess the social and political acumen that leads to effective interpersonal communications, cross-cultural literacy, and acceptance of diversity. In addition, teacher leaders need the intellectual capital required to model personal reflection and to recognize and use constructive feedback. Teacher leaders possess the self-confidence necessary to plan teaching and learning that is provocative and growth inducing. Furthermore, acknowledging the power differential, teacher leaders need to manage up and build a mutual trusting relationship with the principal. Finally, effective teacher leaders recognize their limitations and are comfortable with knowing that no single educator can demonstrate all leadership competencies all the time.

Complexities of Leading

Classroom teaching has always been a challenging profession given that teachers must negotiate competing expectations and navigate conflicting professional mandates related to evolving curricula and pedagogies. Also, learners in classrooms represent a plethora of learning needs and a wide range of parental hopes and aspirations. Although such challenges are longstanding, the intensity of other educational factors has increased (see Table 13.1).

First, role expectations have changed. Quality standards in many countries require teachers to engage in career-long learning related to maintaining certification, mandated programs of studies, instructional improvement, technological advancements, and amelioration of the effects of colonization. In addition to a thorough knowledge of curricular areas, teachers in many nations are asked to develop and nurture positive relationships throughout their schools and with social services personnel. In

Table 13.1 Complexities of leading

| Complexities | Challenges |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Traditional expectations | Evolving curricula and pedagogies Wide-ranging learner needs Parental hopes as aspirations Child development Special needs learners Classroom management Instructional strategies |
| Changing role expectations | Career-long learning Maintaining certification New curricula School improvement initiatives Technology Social media awareness Decolonization Collaboration with community agencies Discrimination and harassment of women Perceiving women as leaders Inclusive practices and catering for diverse needs Building resilience and attention to Well-being |
| Nontraditional skills | Leading teams Member of professional learning communities Adult learning Conflict management Managing up |
| Preparing students as community members | Basic education Intercultural literacy Communication skills Social skills Integration into the workplace Information management Utilization of emerging technologies Environmental sustainability |
| Social issues | Student wellness Socioeconomic diversity Large population migrations Sexual orientation and gender identity |
| Politics of leading | Social and intergenerational trauma Reconciliation of past discrimination Government–union conflict Rapid community and global change |

other settings, women educators face discrimination and harassment, alongside diminished credibility from school community members who may not expect women to exercise significant influence beyond the classroom or even within it.

Teacher education programs around the world may facilitate skill development related to literacy and student assessment, for example. However, they rarely focus specifically on the difficult-to-acquire skills and knowledge needed to exercise effective leadership within work teams and professional learning communities.

School improvement initiatives are multidimensional and depend upon teachers having the capacity to sustain positive and productive organizational cultures. Teachers are also called upon to lead professional development initiatives, which assume knowledge of principles of adult learning. These complex skill sets are in addition to the usual expectations of teacher knowledge of child development, special needs learners, classroom management, and instructional strategies.

Educational systems have been structured for decades to address the employment and economic challenges that societies face. That is, employers and postsecondary institutions expect that high school graduates will possess basic mathematical, scientific, communication, and social skills that contribute to successful integration into the workplace. Moreover, recent educational mandates include a focus on what are often called 21st century skills, which include intercultural literacy, information management, utilization of emerging technologies, and environmental sustainability. Teachers' mandates in these areas are reliant upon interdisciplinary knowledge and high capacities to collaborate effectively with members of school communities.

More recently, new and experienced teachers are tasked with ameliorating the challenging impacts of large numbers of social issues. These include widespread concerns about students' mental and emotional health, particularly during the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa and the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. Other issues include unprecedented cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity in classrooms, resulting from massive migrations of populations seeking escape from societal unrest, war, and deep poverty. In addition, teacher leaders now work with colleagues and community members to support students struggling with their personal sexual orientations and gender identities.

The politics of leading are often daunting for teachers who are rarely prepared to address inequalities and instabilities that linger from past periods of social trauma in the form of colonization and slavery, for example. Teachers and their learners are impacted by the residual anger from family disruptions due to residential schools, abuse of women and children, and strict class systems that restrict social mobility. Teacher leaders also deal with the uncertainty associated with government–union conflict that often impedes school improvement and professional development programming. In short, teacher leaders serve in a time of rapidly changing community and global contexts.

Learning to Lead

The chapters in this book collectively emphasize that teachers at all career stages have the potential to influence within their school communities. Teacher leaders may influence differently at various career stages, but leadership identity and capacity can continue to develop and evolve. Importantly, growth as a teacher leader requires career-long formal and informal experiences in both preservice and in-service teacher education (see Fig. 13.3).

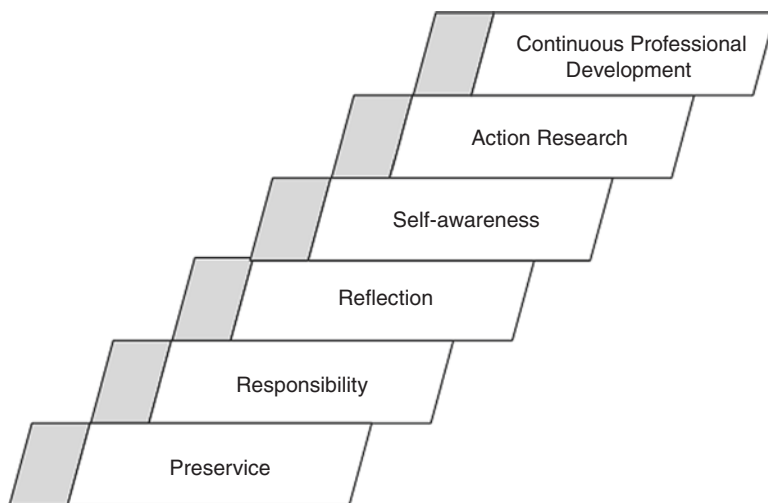


Fig. 13.3 Learning to be a teacher leader

Some or even most teacher education programs provide limited opportunities for preservice education students to discover the connections among teacher leadership, school culture, and effective teaching. However, the suggestion that teacher leadership development should begin at the initial teacher preparation stage garnered strong support among ISTL researchers. It was noted that preservice teachers should study leadership before their first practicum appointments during which future teachers should be mentored in the acquisition of leadership knowledge, skills, and competencies.

Teachers should take responsibility for their own professional learning early in their preservice teacher education programs. This increases the likelihood that they subsequently will enjoy expanded professional opportunities, heightened job satisfaction, and greater success in the classroom. It is incumbent upon university-based teacher educators to design preservice programs in which their students encounter theory in the context of meaningful practicum experiences. However, the success of practicum experiences that enhance teacher leadership capacity depends upon placing preservice teachers with mentor teachers who are themselves teacher leaders. The weakness of too many practicum placements is that mentor teachers may have teaching experience but not be prepared as effective mentors or have the capacity to be teacher leaders.

Furthermore, practicum programming too often requires preservice teachers to describe their observations in the form of journals without holding them accountable for substantial reflection about both instruction and the functions of teacher leadership in school communities. The danger in this superficial approach to understanding teaching and leading is that preservice teachers may be unaware of their potential leadership influence on students and colleagues. In turn, this may allow the

entrenchment of the perception that they are “just teachers” rather than influencers and knowledge creators.

The benefits of leadership development continue to accrue in early career stages. The evidence accumulated by the ISTL research team strongly indicates that student learning and teacher learning are closely related. Therefore, the primary focus of early career teachers seeking professional learning opportunities should begin in their classrooms with the demonstration of their ability to design and manage learning activities and to complete classroom administrative duties successfully. Collaborating with other teachers enhances teacher leadership development, particularly if it maintains a focus on improving teaching and learning. Professional learning activities can include collaborating with colleagues to develop new instructional strategies, implement innovative curriculum projects, and develop relational skills needed to participate in effective teams. Other examples may include co-designing and co-implementing interdisciplinary instructional units and differentiated instruction.

The enhancement of teacher leadership skills and knowledge requires continuous professional development, well into the mid- and late-career stages. However, many teachers may be discouraged by professional development that is related to their professional practice and, worse, provided in a one-size-fits-all format that they are required to attend. Professional learning for teacher leaders can be enhanced if it is self-initiated, led by other teachers, and job embedded.

Powerful learning can result from engaging in action research aimed at improving teaching and learning. However, teachers need to be taught how to collect and use feedback from students, colleagues, and school administrators. Participating in collaborative action research initiatives with colleagues enhances leadership and followership skills, mutual influence, and collective impact throughout the school. Additional benefits include higher levels of trust, enhanced communication, and more effective instruction.

Successful action research depends upon teachers knowing how to collaborate with colleagues in meaningful ways. Mentoring peers can be a beneficial function of teacher leadership, particularly in the context of school-based action research that is part of ongoing school improvement.

Because the field of education is subject to many internal and external forces, teacher leaders must be able to adapt to ongoing changes in curriculum, school structure, and accountability procedures. To do this, teacher leaders need to accrue foundational understandings of the professional expectations and legal frameworks within which they must operate. Key attributes of teachers who can lead during times of uncertainty include an awareness of presuppositions and of the socialization factors that contribute to professional behaviors and an awareness based on ongoing and informed reflection of their practice as teacher leaders.

Potential Benefits

The benefits of teacher leadership that emerged to date in the ISTL corroborate what can be observed in much of the literature cited throughout this book. Most of the benefits fall under the umbrella of school improvement that is premised on the desire to improve teaching and learning (see Fig. 13.4). Indeed, ISTL researchers underscored that the primary motivation of teacher leaders is to seek ongoing improvements to classroom and schoolwide instructional practices that facilitate learning for all students. Teacher leaders are central to school improvement initiatives.

That is, teacher leaders were observed to be change agents who serve voluntarily as informal influencers. They function without the burdens often associated with formal leadership appointments. They are not responsible for teacher evaluations or liaising with system leaders, both of which constitute power differentials that may impinge on trust and shared commitment to working collaboratively. Also, because most teacher leaders are classroom-based, they know and understand their students and are well positioned to engage actively in curriculum planning that leads to

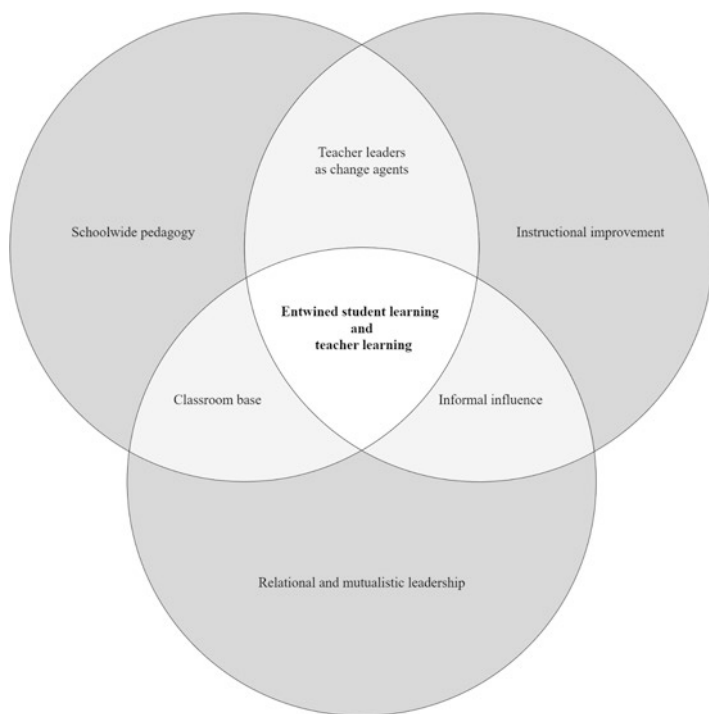


Fig. 13.4 Benefits of teacher leadership

innovative and nontraditional instructional strategies, enhanced by creative student assessment and reporting practices.

Teacher leaders who operate in supportive school improvement contexts are skilled at developing powerful relationships with peers and school principals that are relational and mutualistic. Such relationships lead to the formation and sustenance of professional learning communities that facilitate teacher cooperation, shared commitment to the entire school community, and continuing professional learning designed and facilitated within the school by teacher leaders.

An important additional benefit of teacher leadership is a heightened capacity to challenge hierarchical school governance practices. That is, teacher leaders may serve as transformative agents who counterintuitively facilitate teamwork while concurrently challenging top-down decision-making and ameliorating pedagogical tensions that arise when innovative instructional practices are introduced.

Teacher Leadership and Context

The previous sections highlight what ISTL researchers have observed in relation to the profile of teacher leaders, the complexities associated with their work, how they learn to lead, and the benefits of teacher leadership. These sections assume that contextual factors align sufficiently to make teacher leadership possible. Those factors will be described in more detail later in this chapter, but it is important first to highlight briefly why context is so important.

First, although school communities are subject to global and local influences, teacher leadership is situational, and the roles of teacher leaders may vary from one context to another. Even the nuances of how teacher leadership is conceptualized and enacted are sensitive to contextual variations of organizational and societal cultures. For change associated with school improvement to be successfully implemented, it needs to be coherent with local cultures.

Another factor that is far less observable and even absent in most previous reports is the impact of the professional identity of individual teacher leaders. It is impossible for anyone—teacher, principal, student, parent—to be a neutral influence within a school community. Either school community members accept and live within the cultural parameters that exist when they join a school, *which reinforces current cultural norms and practices*, or if they do not accept dominant beliefs and values, *they become a catalyst for minor or even major modifications to school culture*.

Therefore, changes to educational practices, whether positive or destructive, require significant complementarity among three salient features: school culture, community culture, and professional identity.

Another important contextual consideration introduced in multiple chapters is that teacher leadership originates in Western nations but is influential in explicit, but

more often implicit ways, in policy documents relating to teacher certification, teacher evaluation, and teaching standards in non-Western countries. In other words, cross-cultural borrowing of the concept of teacher leadership is widespread. Most often, cross-cultural borrowing in education is panned as inappropriate, but it can also be argued that international studies of teacher leadership at the potential to enrich and contextualize leadership development in preservice and in-service programming contribute to teacher leadership in the service of school improvement.

Factors that Support Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership in the service of instructional improvement is an aspirational concept that few educators, parents, or community members would challenge. However, the enactment of teacher leadership is a fragile process, according to both past international research reports and current ISTL findings. It requires agreement among school community members that several broad parameters for teaching and learning are important. It also requires system support and the mutual understanding between school principals and teachers that shared, professionally responsible decision-making—rather than hierarchical, top-down decision making—is in the best interests of all. Teacher leadership also functions best within the context of professional learning communities that are supported by ongoing professional development. However, these support factors are unlikely to be successful without sufficient attention to readiness (see Fig. 13.5).

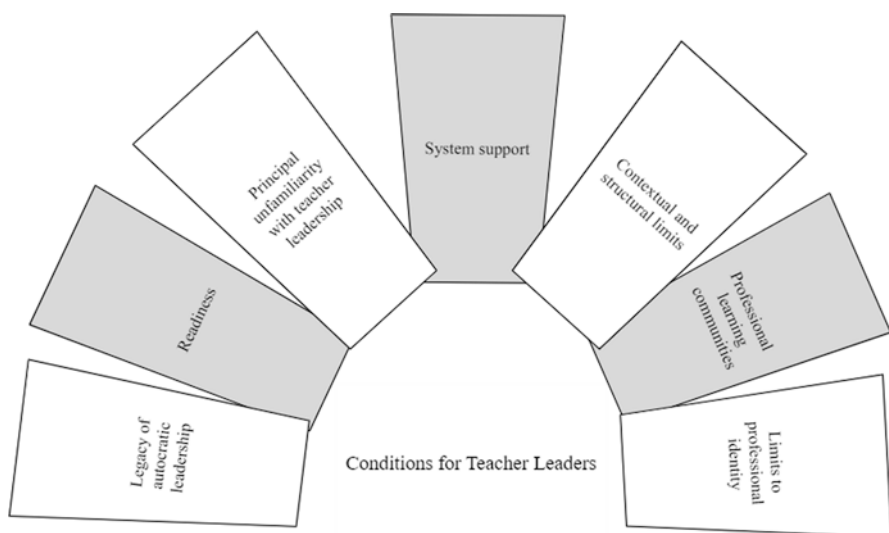


Fig. 13.5 Cards dealt to teacher leaders

Readiness

School community readiness for the pursuit and implementation of teacher leadership as part of school improvement is dependent upon several elements. First, readiness cannot be assumed; it must be intentionally developed, and school principals play a vital role in readiness development. Principals frequently developed their understanding of school leadership by watching and learning from how their professional mentors operated within an autocratic framework. In that context, shared decision-making was framed as an aspirational concept and implemented at a superficial level. Moreover, learning to lead within a hierarchical school governance structure usually precludes a deep understanding that shared, democratic decision-making can lead to school effectiveness. It sometimes requires a traumatic series of events in the life of school principals, such as an encounter with a toxic workplace, global pandemic, or all-staff rebellion, to shock principals into being open to teacher leadership, shared decision-making, and teamwork.

Even when school principals decide that shared decision-making is worth pursuing, they need to learn how to facilitate that type of governance in collaboration with informal leaders. Similarly, teachers frequently report a need to learn how to collaborate with peers and supervisors because they too may have developed their professional identities within individualistic teaching cultures where they worked primarily in isolated classrooms. Ideally, principals and teachers who decide to find ways to work collaboratively should learn together how to establish shared values and to establish a predictable process for making decisions together.

Readiness is influenced by the stability of the school staff. The practice in some school jurisdictions to move principals to new schools every 3–5 years can disrupt the capacity of principals to understand the norms and values of school community members which, in turn, obscures the clarity with which school goals can be established and relationships established. A parallel practice of moving teachers who experience challenges to other schools can in some instances lead to successful integration into the new schools, but it also may introduce lengthy orientations to new school communities. In worst-case scenarios, frequent movement of formal and informal leaders, usually intended to disrupt reluctance to participate in change initiatives, may risk contributing to the loss of commitment to schools and reluctance to engage with the demanding work of leadership. It is important for system leaders to consider the need to introduce change agents into schools in relation to stability and sustainability.

System Support

Shared learning by principals and teacher leaders can be instigated by system personnel in the first instance or, alternatively, supported if school-based educators decide collectively to learn together. System support implies that senior leaders

understand the value of teacher leadership in overall school improvement. Strong system support communicates to teachers with leadership potential that their efforts will be enhanced by access to expert facilitation, time, and space for professional dialogue. This support will help school staff members to clarify school goals and to negotiate the roles that each plays in the achievement of the goals.

There are several reasons that it is best for principals and teacher leaders to learn together to establish and maintain a shared or distributed leadership decision-making model. First, the work of teacher leaders is challenging without the support of their principals, particularly in a culture where teacher leaders are not seen as the norm. Teachers and principals often have limited input into who will be assigned to a particular school. Thus, there is a strong need for all parties to know how to work together effectively, despite their differences. Teacher leaders can play a strong role in facilitating collective responsibility for instructional improvement and in developing a synergistic working relationship with their principals.

There are variations in the descriptors encountered by the ISTL research team for how teacher leaders and principals can establish a viable interactive decision-making relationship. Terms such as shared leadership, distributed leadership, parallel leadership, participatory democratic leadership, and master teachers are used frequently in policy documents, research reports, and teaching standards. The differences among the descriptors are debated, but they collectively refer to the roles and responsibilities that teacher leaders and school leadership teams negotiate to progress toward their shared vision and collective goals for their schools. In fact, it is likely that strategies for collaboration will evolve continuously as individuals develop their skill sets, increase levels of trust, shift responsibilities, and acquire new knowledge related to school improvement.

Forms of shared leadership also have been described as *bottom-up and middle-out* or as *bottom-up and top-down* leadership models. They focus on the interactions of formal and informal school leaders working together to increase their teaching effectiveness. They are also characterized by inclusive decision-making, and by involving teacher leaders in school governing bodies and in developing school policies. Sharing influence requires principals to trust their teaching colleagues to lead and, in turn, teacher leaders need to be confident that principals will work alongside them to improve schoolwide instruction and to maintain a productive school culture.

Professional Learning Communities

Effective relationships between teacher leaders and school principals go with collaboration. Their shared learning and collective influence also promote the establishment of effective professional learning communities in which formal and informal leaders, including educators and support staff, focus on working together to improve student learning. The purpose of professional learning communities is to provide professional, social, and emotional support to one another in the pursuit of a shared vision. The likelihood of successful attainment of school goals is increased

dramatically when members share accountability for progress and clearly communicate their personal responsibilities, and challenge current practices and expectations for one another. This type of teamwork invites professional dialogue among members, regardless of their formal roles, and reduces professional isolation.

Another ISTL observation is that teacher leaders influence their communities positively by maintaining openness to revising teaching and administrative practices. Their leadership improves their teaching while influencing colleagues to adapt and solve problems. Their influence also increases participation by other teachers in decision-making committees, grade-level planning teams, and extracurricular activities. Interestingly, teacher leaders who contribute to successful school communities may be encouraged to seek more formal leadership positions with titles such as instructional coach, mentor teacher, or master teacher. Although other teachers and school management teams may mourn the movement of teacher leaders to appointments with increased formal power, the impact on the larger community may be heightened regard for the teaching profession because of the expanded impact of teacher leaders.

When Teacher Leadership Is Unlikely to Work

The aspirational value of teacher leadership is clear, and educators in many cultures will do well to continue to value the concept or at least to consider the fit of some of the attributes of teacher leadership with their contexts. Nonetheless, ISTL researchers underscored a significant range of situational conditions that suggest a strong likelihood that teacher leadership, as it is understood and applied in the West, may not be appropriate or beneficial.

Principals' Unfamiliarity with Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is not a clear construct in the West, so it is not surprising that the ISTL research team members in non-Western countries found that the term is not widely used and, when it does appear in policy documents and professional dialogue, its meaning is obscure. General unawareness of teacher leadership is exacerbated by the fact that school principals in, for example, the Latin American and African nations included in the study typically are not required to complete additional credentials such as certificates or diplomas or graduate degrees. Some do hold advanced credentials of course, but most school principals will not have studied teacher leadership, school improvement, or school effectiveness. Even in situations where the department of education policies refer to teacher leadership, they may have been heavily influenced by academics from Western European and North American hired as advisors rather than by local academics and senior leaders, resulting in a weak contextual fit.

ISTL findings to date indicate that principals, headteachers, or school management teams—the nomenclatures vary—are gatekeepers who limit or facilitate innovations to curriculum implementation and leadership practices. Therefore, when principals in schools in Western and other countries fail to understand organizational cultures or encounter leadership challenges, they revert to the leadership practices with which they are most familiar, and those typically are autocratic in nature. This may be especially true in situations where principals are not held to performance standards and, in some instances, may not have a strong background as a classroom teacher. Accordingly, an important ISTL finding is that teacher leadership is unlikely to flourish without the support and encouragement of formal school leaders.

Legacies of Autocratic Leadership

Teacher leaders in the nations where the concept has a strong profile—Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, for example—may argue that they regularly battle autocratic school and system leaders who speak the language of inclusive decision-making but do not necessarily demonstrate shared decision making in their professional practices. However, the legacy of top-down leadership is embedded firmly in some of the other countries included in the ISTL. In those contexts, there is a mostly unquestioned assumption among both formal leaders and classroom teachers that the term school leadership refers to principals.

Even when system and department of education policies refer to shared leadership, teamwork, and community engagement, the actual implementation of mandates relies upon bureaucratic channels and a top-down chain of command. In those circumstances, the very introduction of the idea of shared or distributed leadership may result in strong resistance, often subversive with detrimental effects within the school community. Teachers who aspire to exercise informal leadership that is sanctioned by formal leaders may find that there is a higher chance of influencing their school communities if they move into formal leadership appointments.

Another aspect of the legacy of autocratic leadership is the belief among some teachers that all classroom teachers are equal and that teachers who emerge as community influencers should be resisted, so they do not stand out as more influential than any other teacher. The term *tall poppy syndrome* was used to describe how teachers of strong community standing may be criticized and sabotaged.

Limits to Professional Identity

The early stages of teacher identity emerge in initial teacher education programs, and in the West, teacher candidates typically take courses that cover a multitude of topics relating to the curriculum in the core content areas, instructional strategies,

child and adolescent development, and neurodiversity. They also usually study the history and philosophy of education in their regions, along with practica in schools where they are mentored by practicing teachers.

Thus, the primary focus of teacher education tends to be on teaching expertise in the classroom, an understandable and important priority but one that has an unintended outcome. It sets the pattern of teachers seeing that their influence relates to their classrooms and establishes the norm that the classroom is a private space. Moreover, the dearth of attention in teacher education to leadership fails to help teachers recognize that what they do and what they can do is leadership.

The failure of educators to learn about teacher leadership, with its professional accountability and school improvement components, in preservice and in-service education limits the conceptualization of teaching as a profession. ISTL research team members reported the perception in some of their contexts that teaching is an occupation rather than a profession. In turn, this encourages the notion that teachers are implementers of mandated change, not change agents.

Teachers who are unfamiliar with their potential role as leaders are unlikely to value collaboration with colleagues. They may not have experienced opportunities to develop the skills and motivations needed to work closely with colleagues to improve student learning. They may not value seeking feedback about their teaching from colleagues or even from students. The capacity to participate in peer observation and coaching remains undeveloped. Moreover, opportunities to engage in action research within their classrooms and schools are limited.

When teachers are not perceived as professionals by parents and community members, when influence is thought to be restricted to the classroom, and when collaboration skills are underdeveloped, it is predictable that change in schools will be extremely difficult. School staff members typically resist change initiatives, particularly if changes are externally imposed and understood as accountability measures. Widespread teacher union resistance to teaching standards, external student assessments, and teacher evaluation policies may be the result of teachers not seeing themselves as professionals who are personally accountable for leading and influencing school improvement strategies. Diminished professional identity may explain the ISTL finding that, when efforts are made to introduce shared leadership, school staff members sometimes see it as a chance to reduce the power and control of principals who are unpopular.

Contextual and Structural Limitations

Even when teachers are anxious to pursue professional learning that will enhance their leadership capacity and contribute to collaborative instructional improvement with peers and principals, other characteristics of the school, system, and community may limit success. Obvious limitations include massive socioeconomic inequalities that lead to some community members living in relative luxury while their neighbors subsist in abject poverty characterized by limited or no access to safe

housing, clean drinking water, and education for children in schools staffed by professionally qualified teachers.

It can be argued that teacher leadership, as described in much of the academic literature, is a promising strategy to use to ameliorate social disconnections. Nonetheless, the obstacles of political and social turmoil, post-conflict uncertainty, and large refugee and migrant populations may be virtually insurmountable for teacher leaders. The need for more dramatic and longitudinal interventions by governments and international partners may be necessary before teachers, students, parents, and community members will have the capacity to make significant improvements.

The length of the appointments of teachers and principals is a factor that emerged across many of the nations represented by ISTL research team members. In some instances, ongoing teacher turnover made the sustenance of a learning culture difficult, as did frequent changes in principal appointments, both of which deterred the establishment of school missions and goals. Similarly, inadequate handling of principal transitions obviated the achievement of instructional improvement that was in process prior to the appointment of new principals. In yet other cases, the assignment of principals to their schools essentially constitutes lifetime appointments of principals who may not be amenable to sharing decision-making power.

Working conditions are central to teachers' leadership capacity. The ISTL team reported how some teachers in their contexts experience low salaries, large classes, and limited system support. Other observations included union–government conflict leading to relationship tensions and labor unrest. Teachers in some contexts do not hold appointments to schools but, rather, are paid on a per-course basis and teach courses in several schools each week to make a living as *taxi teachers*. Collegiality is fragile in the best of conditions, but it is difficult or impossible for teachers in such situations to exercise significant educational leadership or participate in professional learning communities.

Highly centralized and bureaucratic school systems are observed to limit professional learning and leadership opportunities for teachers. Even when system policies are intended to promote distributed leadership, frustration emerged when the policies were accompanied by concurrent expectations for uniformity in what students are expected to learn and how teachers are to implement the curriculum. Even well-intentioned bureaucratic mandates, sometimes due to the influence of international funding bodies from the West, in developing nations, limit opportunities for leaders in school communities to shape their school communities to meet local needs.

Finally, low student achievement in the context of historically dysfunctional societies and school systems is a daunting challenge for leaders at all levels. Teacher, student, and parental expectations are likely to stagnate at discouraging levels. The very teachers who are needed in institutional and system resets are also the ones who contributed to the broken frameworks. Teacher leaders do not have a morally or professionally acceptable choice except to serve their communities to the best of their abilities, but establishing trust and replacing institutionalized obstacles may take generations to achieve. Teacher leaders experience inadequate support and combative responses to their efforts to counter longstanding educational injustices.

Challenges and Opportunities

The ISTL originated with a group of colleagues from several countries whose interests were piqued by the concept of teacher leadership. Because the research team members are primarily university-based, they sought to add to the wider understanding of teacher leadership and consider how they might contribute to the knowledge and skill set of teacher leaders. The primary research question focused on how teacher leadership is conceptualized and enacted and, also, on the implications for educational stakeholders. The findings shared in this book address the overall conceptualization of teacher leadership by describing what teacher leaders do, how they learn to lead, and what the benefits of being a teacher leader are. The implications for educational stakeholders are shared in the chapters that describe the factors that support and impinge on the work of teacher leaders. The work of the ISTL research team continues, so there will be more to follow.

In the meantime, what we have learned by examining the work of previous research reports and literature reviews, and then by conducting our own research, is that the term teacher leadership is an umbrella term that refers to the influence of primarily classroom-based teachers on the larger school community. It relates to the role of teachers as change agents, participants in school improvement initiatives, collaborators, and in-school professional developers. We understand that the literature is replete with calls for greater definitional clarity and recommendations that researchers seek to discover cause–effect relationships between teacher leadership and instructional improvement, and we support these calls.

We also understand that educational leaders live real-world professional lives within which educational policies and practices rarely are supported by irrefutable cause–effect data or even strong patterns of causation. Therefore, we recommend that the term teacher leader be ascribed to those whose classroom experiences, educational backgrounds, and professional personas provide them with the capacity to exercise positive and productive influences on behalf of learners, peers, and community members. We encourage them to embrace the ambiguity associated with teacher leadership.

Teacher leaders should also be aware of the discussions among researchers and policymakers of the nuances of concepts such as parallel leadership, distributed leadership, shared leadership, and teacher leadership. ISTL findings also suggest that teacher leaders should be informed by ongoing academic debates relating to what is different about school administration, management, and leadership without allowing the debates to impede their becoming actively engaged in improving teaching and learning in their classrooms and school communities.

It is important to note that ISTL findings suggest that the term teacher leader be considered the domain of those educators who are deeply committed to their students and to teaching as a profession. They may not see their work as a calling per se, but they obviously understand it to be more than employment. The inclusion of an altruistic dimension to teacher leadership is important because, although it is indeed possible and common for teachers to move from a self-centered practice to a

student and community-oriented one during their careers, some leadership can be negative. That is, some classroom teachers choose not to embrace their responsibility to serve their school communities constructively. Some participate in destructive behaviors that contribute to toxic school cultures. It is entirely possible for teachers to be externally motivated to participate in school initiatives early in their careers—because they see it as a path to promotion and prestige—and to progress to become intrinsically motivated. In other words, virtually all teachers have the potential to be teacher leaders, although not all teachers reach the levels of commitment, altruism, and professionalism that make them teacher leaders. In fact, an area of future research may be to explore the differences between authentic teacher leaders and teachers whose leadership potential remains unrealized.

We have observed that teacher leaders are cultural navigators. They can concurrently honor and gently challenge local school community histories and values. They are culturally literate within their local and broader communities. They recognize that schools are not entirely local and are subject to mandates from regional and national leaders. They may understand that cross-cultural borrowing is inevitable in a global village and, if they do not, they are open to learning how external factors shape their school communities and to learning how they can assist their students and colleagues to respond and accommodate.

Importantly, teacher leaders understand, sometimes thoughtfully and in other instances intuitively, that it is impossible for them to be neutral forces in the context of their school cultures. They realize that they have a personal responsibility to participate in decisions about the type of teaching and learning that school community members value. They can ask themselves who they are as teachers and who they want to be and then design a personal professional plan that will lead them to achieving their goals. Their awareness of teachers' professional responsibility to seek ongoing improvement facilitates their willingness to learn to lead by leading. Their individual readiness to engage in personal improvement assists them in helping to develop schoolwide readiness for school improvement, including supporting students who are marginalized and disadvantaged.

The core components of teacher leadership—social and political acumen, individual autonomy, altruistic values and beliefs, and willingness to act—are recognizable attributes of teacher leaders across cultures. However, the enactment of leadership looks different in various contexts. The complexities of leading, shared in Table 13.1, have generic titles and descriptions, but they are certainly present in Western and non-Western nations. The work of teacher leaders is challenging, and it may be that failure to achieve professional goals is more likely than success, reflecting the daunting power of organizational homeostasis that supports the status quo.

Confronting barriers to professional learning and school improvement requires teacher leaders to process the tensions that inevitably arise among professional responsibilities, community allegiances, and personal commitments. Teachers who engage in influencing within their school communities should be prepared to steer through some levels of imposed turmoil and professional turbulence. In all instances, teacher leaders should attend to self-care. In some contexts, teacher leaders may

need to attend to their professional safety, and in rare instances, personal safety may need to be a consideration. The enactment of teacher leadership can be a fragile and politicized process. Leadership may be most possible in contexts where there is a situational fit between teacher leaders and their communities.

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Chapter 14

Teacher Leaders: Cautions and Questions



Charles F. Webber 

Abstract The value of teacher leadership is logical and intuitive. It is a central element of constructs such as school improvement, school effectiveness, and professional learning communities. The connection between teacher leadership and student achievement has not been documented convincingly by empirical data. Indeed, the very definition of teacher leadership remains vague and contested. Nonetheless, a commonly accepted description of teacher leadership as the influence of classroom-based teachers on improving teaching and learning may be enough to warrant ongoing attention.

These uncertainties must not suggest that attempts to learn more about teacher leadership should be abandoned. Rather, educators with experience in formal school-based leadership positions know that some classroom-based teachers influence members of the school community much more than others do. Some teachers' influence is positive, while some teachers' influence is more neutral or even toxic. Therefore, it is important that researchers and professional developers continue to learn more about the attributes of teacher leaders who contribute to school improvement, even in the face of significant challenges. It is equally important that support for teacher leaders align with the unique attributes of their school communities.

Finally, studies of several teacher leadership topics have the potential to further guide teacher educators, professional developers, and formal leaders. Examples of those topics include teacher advocacy for students, risk-taking behaviors, the value of formal academic credentials, and the motives guiding teacher leaders.

Keywords Teacher leadership · Cultural context · Teacher influence · Leadership attributes

The ISTL has not derived a definition of teacher leadership that has clear parameters and lends itself to cause–effect analyses. The most common description of teacher

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leadership as the influence wielded by classroom-based teachers in the interest of improving teaching and learning in their school communities may be enough of a definition.

Schools and school systems are ecosystems, with some principals and teachers who stand out more than others because of their wide acceptance as credible, trustworthy individuals to whom community members are willing to entrust the education of their children. These are the principals with whom many teachers wish to work because they facilitate a generative space for others to lead and influence. The teachers are those who parents strive to have instruct their children. They are the ones to whom other teachers turn to for advice and professional learning. It is true that most teachers have the potential to become such influential informal and formal leaders but not all will.

The ISTL research team has shared in this book its observations about the importance of teacher leadership and the influence of teacher leaders in the complex teaching and learning environments where they work. The researchers have cautioned that teacher leaders share common attributes, but their leadership is enacted differently within the cultural and organizational contexts of their schools and communities. The ability of teacher leaders to contribute to school improvement initiatives, even in conditions with daunting challenges, causes others to value their capacity to focus on possibilities and to lead.

Teacher leaders across cultures are guided by elevated levels of altruism and deep commitments to their students and school communities. Their actions demonstrate their willingness to include colleagues and parents in decision-making and curricular innovations. They accept that learners and their communities require unique approaches to what and how students learn. They attract the trust of their colleagues and of formal school leaders. Their altruistic approach separates teacher leaders from their colleagues, whose motivations may be less magnanimous.

Teachers who gravitate to the role of teacher leader are likely to cultivate the creative and entrepreneurial dimensions of their profession. They accommodate change by seeing opportunities to collaborate with principals and other teachers to generate spaces that celebrate diversity and facilitate equity. They reflect and exercise professional judgment and are characterized as innovators rather than resisters.

An important attribute of teacher leaders that emerged during the ISTL is a strong self-awareness that facilitated meaningful reflection about their work. Their high degree of autonomy allowed them to be less vulnerable to the forces of socialization that can impede creative teaching and thoughtful problem-solving. It is possible that teacher leaders' autonomous natures and capacity for thoughtful reflection constitute a form of self-care.

Interestingly, although consideration of a *tall poppy syndrome* is a risk factor for teachers, conflict management skills did not surface as a significant component of teacher leaders' skill sets. This may be due in part to the informal and nonthreatening style of leading allowed to teacher leaders who are not charged with fulfilling the formal responsibilities carried by principals. A corollary of the minimal appearance of conflict management in the international study of teacher leadership is the observation that teacher leader advocacy is directed toward the educational welfare

of students and not politicized advocacy directed toward formal leaders and policymakers.

What did emerge across cultural settings was a clear understanding that continuous professional learning is part of being a teacher leader. The learning was primarily self-directed and often appeared as informal learning with peers in the context of improving teaching and learning. The social acumen of teacher leaders led to their connectedness to other members of their school communities and to participation in large community and professional networks. Teacher leaders were described as adroit at garnering mentorship from colleagues and, concurrently, serving as mentors to peers at all career stages. Most important, teacher leaders were characterized by the ability to see opportunities for professional learning and to participate in school-wide instructional improvement. They had the ability to plan effectively their teaching and professional learning and then to act on their plans.

Members of the ISTL collectively have completed several of the six stages of the original research design. Much of that work is shared in this book and elsewhere as journal articles. Case study reports are forthcoming. Several informative oral histories have been conducted with mid- and late-career teachers, plus retired teachers, all of whom are seen as leaders by other teachers. Some are influential because of the wide impact of their work in their school communities, a few see themselves as voices of advocacy for teachers who represent racial and cultural diversity, and the impacts of other teacher leaders have spread nationally and internationally.

Emerging from the ISTL, several teacher leadership topics merit further research. They include the following:

- An exploration of how some teacher leaders who participated in the ISTL describe themselves as *advocates* for their students while others say they are *activists*. Is there a difference between advocacy and activism and, if so, what are the repercussions of each?
- Teacher leaders are described at various points in this book as risk takers. What are the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes of risk-taking behavior?
- It was observed in this study that teacher leaders seek to improve teaching and learning, which, in turn, is influenced by principals, system leaders, parents, and community members. What happens to teacher leadership and school improvement initiatives when principals and system leaders change? How do influential parents change the dynamics of leadership in schools?
- Regarding how teachers learn to lead, are there differential impacts from informal and formal learning experiences? Do additional academic credentials influence how or if teachers lead in their school communities?
- If improving student learning is the aim of teacher leadership, then how do students perceive the influence of teachers reputed to be leaders?
- In the previous chapter, the argument was made that, to be classroom-based leaders, teachers must have altruistic motives. What of those whose motivations are less noble? Some teachers manage to contribute to unprofessional school cultures where bullying of teachers or principals is tolerated and even encouraged.

What makes some teachers toxic leaders and how can their impact be ameliorated?

- If teachers begin to develop their professional identity early in their preservice teacher education programs, then how should the leadership functions of their future roles in school be facilitated?
- Finally, is teacher leadership even the best descriptor of how teachers influence their learning communities? Is teacher leadership in fact just teachers doing what they ought to do?

It is clear from the literature relating to teacher leadership, school improvement, and school effectiveness that a cohesive school community with a positive mission and clear learning goals is desirable. Adding to the research literature in these areas, as the ISTL research team is doing, will inform teacher educators, principal preparation programs, professional developers, and policymakers.

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