# Chapter 11
# Teacher Leadership in the Moroccan Context: Perceptions and Practices

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**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 underreseached.

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

|  | N | Mean | SD | 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

|                              | $N$ | Mean | $SD$  | 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 = 8.38, 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

|  | N | Mean | SD | 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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