

Teacher Leadership: Concept and Research Themes

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ABSTRACT

Accurately defining the concept and connotation of teacher leadership is the basis for carrying out related theoretical and empirical research. Thus, this study analyses how teacher leadership is conceptualised from its subjects, objects, and the situations in which it takes place. It is realized from the literature that formal teacher leaders and informal teacher leaders are the main subjects of teacher leadership. It is also found that teacher leadership essentially exerted influence on students, the teacher leaders themselves, colleagues, schools, and the broader academic community. The influence usually happens within the classroom or outside the classroom. In fact leadership can emerge from anywhere in the school and is not confined to the formal leaders of the organization. Yet, there has been little investigation into the relationship between teacher leadership and student learning. Nonetheless, a comprehensive literature review shows that the research themes of teacher leadership include influencing factors, promoting strategies, training program, research model, perception of teacher leadership, school improvement and decision making, definition, and the relationship between teacher leadership and student learning. On the basis of the current research themes, the literature suggests that more quantitative research should be conducted to explore how teacher leadership promotes student learning and academic performance.

Keywords: teacher leadership; concept; research themes; review

INTRODUCTION

Recognised as an essential component of school reform and improvement, teacher leadership has been a topic of concern among educational scholars and politicians since its inception. Since the late 1990s, scholars have consistently urged teachers to assume a leadership position to increase the effectiveness of schools and their quality of instruction (Mujis & Harris, 2003). Scholars spent the next few decades investigating how teacher leadership might increase school effectiveness and teaching quality, as well as how to support the growth of teacher leadership in the classroom (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teachers' professional knowledge, extensive educational experience, and capacity to influence others enable them to serve as change agents, curriculum architects, learning facilitators, mentors, or teacher role models in their respective

fields of expertise (Tomal, Schilling, & Wilhite, 2014). Aside from that, promoting teacher professional development, teaching and learning quality, and school effectiveness are all enhanced by facilitating teacher leadership development.

CONCEPTUALISATION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Despite the fact that teacher leadership has received a great deal of attention in the field of education research over the last two decades, there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of defining what it is and how it should be operationalized. The reason for this is that teacher leadership is a broad phrase that incorporates a wide variety of educational tasks and responsibilities (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett, & Roberts, 2010).

In the first instance, teacher leadership can be divided into two categories: teacher leadership within the classroom and teacher leadership outside the classroom. As an example, Lieberman and Friedrich (2007) believed that teacher leadership comprises collective leadership, in which instructors are held accountable for their actions outside of the classroom. Although some researchers did not explicitly define teacher leadership as occurring only within or outside of classrooms by situating it in the context of schools and communities (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2008; Muijs, Chapman, & Armstrong, 2013; Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), the majority of researchers believed that teacher leadership occurs both inside and outside of the classroom. Muijs et al. (2013) found that teacher leadership occurs both inside and outside Von Dohlen and Karvonen (2018) revealed through their empirical research that instructors were the ones who were most frequently reported to be demonstrating leadership in the classroom. The majority of instructors felt that teacher leadership was primarily concerned with classroom management rather than with managing the teaching process itself (Emira 2016). Mijns and colleagues (2013), on the other hand, recommended that teacher leadership should not be restricted to the classroom but should instead expand beyond it and take on leadership roles outside of it. Warren (2019) went on to remark that there is no limit to how classroom teachers can develop into leaders in their own classrooms as well as throughout the entire school system.

Second, when it comes to the objects on which teacher leadership has an impact, the influences of teacher leadership can be divided into the following categories: on students, on teacher leaders themselves, on other teachers, on schools, and on the broader academic community. Several researchers mainly focus on students (Lieberman & Friedrich, 2007; Oqvist & Malmström, 2017). Lu and Chen (2007) stressed the importance of teacher leadership in the lives of teachers. Chen and Dong (2007), as well as Wu and Dai (2008), investigated the impact of teacher leadership on students, colleagues, and principals, as well as the overall development of the school system. Other researchers asserted that the impact of teacher leadership extended well beyond the confines of the classroom since it contributes to the development of entire communities (Childs-Bowen, Moeller, & Scrivener, 2000; Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

In addition, the subject matter that defines teacher leadership can be divided into two categories: formal teacher leaders and informal teacher leaders. According to Jin (2007), teacher leadership is a talent that teacher leaders hold and demonstrate. When it comes to teacher leadership, Lu and Chen (2007), as well as Wenner and Campell (2017), have expressly stated that they are referring to the influence of teacher leaders on other instructors. The majority of researchers, on the other hand, agreed that teacher leadership practice should not be restricted to a specific position, or role (Alexandrou & Swaffield, 2012; Childs-Bowen,

Moeller, & Scrivener, 2000; Harris, 2003). According to Murphy (2005), formal teacher leadership is characterized by role-based behavior, whereas informal teacher leadership is characterized by team-based behavior. When it comes to informal teacher leadership, any teacher can assume some level of leadership responsibility at some point in their career. Furthermore, formal teacher leadership is hierarchical, elitist, and instrumental, resulting in unequal resource allocation, a passively competitive teacher culture, and the growth of only a small number of instructors. Such an environment is not conducive to improving the relationship between employees or creating a culture of genuine communication and cooperation (Murphy, 2005).

As a result, the meaning of teacher leadership changed from one of formal leadership to one of unstructured leadership (Cowdery, 2004). In contrast to the conventional teacher leadership paradigm, which felt that teacher leadership should be selected, the new teacher leadership development paradigm believed that teacher leadership should be collectively determined (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). Teacher leadership has always existed in schools, but the recent growth of teacher leadership connotation placed a greater emphasis on informal teacher leadership than on official teacher leadership in the past (York-barr & Duke, 2004). The explanation for this is that informal teacher leadership had a greater impact on the improvement of teaching and learning than formal teacher leadership on the development of teaching and learning (Wilmore, 2007). Leadership can emerge from anywhere in the school and is not confined to the formal leaders of the organization (Bush, 2013). Teachers' ability to lead others or to enable others to work together toward a common objective or vision is defined by Lou (2015) as teacher leadership. This shows that every teacher has the skill or potential to lead others through the practice of teacher leadership, according to Lou. As previously stated by experts, every teacher engages in leadership activities in their classroom since they regularly assume a leadership role as a classroom teacher (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

THEMES OF RESEARCH ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Several key themes emerged from an examination of the literature about effective teacher leadership practice: factors that promote or hinder the development of teacher leadership, strategies for teacher leadership development, teacher leadership training program, model of teacher leadership, perception of teacher leadership, school improvement and decision making, defining teacher leadership, and teacher leadership and student learning.

Several studies have looked into the factors that have been identified as enabling and limiting teacher leadership. The previous study has found that teacher leadership can be influenced by both internal and external influences. The internal factors can be found in teachers, including teachers' attitudes, values, perspectives as well as their education experience (Yildizbas, 2017), teachers' professional knowledge, personal characteristics, clarity of purpose, and commitment to professional values (Frost & Durrant, 2002; Aliakbari & Darabi, 2013). All those elements were closely associated with their professional development. More recent research has discovered that boosting teacher self-efficacy can help to build teacher leadership skills (Hunzicker, 2012; Zinke, 2013). Apart from that, other researchers discovered that professional growth was a critical component in developing leadership capacity (Ghamrawi, 2013; Boylan, 2016). On the other hand, teacher personality may act as a hindrance to the development of teacher leadership. Wenner and Campbell (2017) found that teacher leaders who were uncomfortable in their leadership roles or did not have

enough confidence in themselves were less convincing in their colleagues' views and performed a poor job of advocating for their positions and work as a result.

In addition to internal characteristics, external factors such as school culture, principle, training and professional development, overburden of work, and poor relationships with peers and/or administrators had a greater impact on teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). According to Kilinc (2014), supportiveness, directedness, restrictiveness, and intimacy in the school climate were all important components and predictors of teacher leadership in their respective schools and districts. Teachers' ability to engage in leadership roles, cooperate with their colleagues, and even find it difficult to find adequate time to encourage their professional growth would be reduced in a toxic, restrictive, and closed school climate, on the other hand. Several studies, including those conducted by Areias (2016), have demonstrated that a school culture in which teachers support and trust one another is strongly associated with higher levels of teacher leadership. Furthermore, the impact that administrators have on teacher leadership has been thoroughly documented by academics over the years. They discovered that the principle's most significant impact on teacher leadership is that the principal distributes leadership to the teachers and fosters a culture of collaboration, trust, and a shared goal (Price, 2012).

The development of teacher leadership, on the other hand, might be slowed down by external influences. Lindahl (2008) discovered that many teacher leaders who had a large number of administrative responsibilities did not have enough time left for their teaching since the roles of leaders and administrators were commonly misconstrued. Due to this situation, teacher leaders resisted the opportunity to participate in leadership activities (Hurt, 2015). Some of them were even distressed by the lack of time they had because they were unable and unavailable to collaborate with their coworkers on their projects (Margolis, 2012). Furthermore, having a non-supportive administration and a lack of resources to aid teachers are both important factors that contribute to the difficulty of teacher leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2016).

Researchers have suggested that more time and space (Harris, 2003), more professional development opportunities (Contreras, 2016), and more teacher leadership positions (Khan & Malik, 2013) be provided in order to restructure school cultures that are open and supportive in nature and support collective decision-making and shared responsibilities to promote the development of teacher leadership. In addition, scholars recommended that stakeholders or principals conduct regular training and projects for teacher leaders in aspects of motivation (Stiehl, 2015), leadership competencies (Stoller, 2013), leadership learning and changes (Ladyshevsky & Flavell, 2012), and professional capacity (Ladyshevsky & Flavell, 2012) and professional capacity (Pecukonis, 2013). Most significantly, school administrators, particularly principals, must put in greater effort to raise the overall level of school administration in their respective districts. They can implement strategies such as giving teacher leaders more autonomy in their work and more opportunities in decision-making (Emira, 2016), creating learning spaces and making time and resources available (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), respecting, recognizing and valuing teacher leaders (Wenner & Campbell, 2016). Apart from that, principals can support and promote teacher leaders in a variety of ways, including communication, support and encouragement, visible involvement, professionalism and respect, and the promotion of teachers as professionals (Sallee, 2014).

Recently, researchers in this field began to look into the possibilities of participating in leadership training programs as a means of improving the level of teacher leadership in the classroom. For example, Coughlan (2015) discovered that participating in a teacher leadership program improved the work and effectiveness of teacher leaders. Participants in training programs displayed significant and outstanding improvements in their teacher leadership behaviors after engaging in the transformational leadership professional development academy, according to related research findings (Bryant, 2017).

In terms of teacher leadership models, the Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2011) developed a teacher leader model standard, which contains the critical elements that comprise the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies of teacher leaders at the school, district, and professional levels, as well as the knowledge, skills, and competencies of school administrators. Wallace, Nesbit, and Miller (1999) developed six teacher leadership models as a result of qualitative study on mathematics and science professional development programs for teacher leaders in the years 1999 and 2000. Similarly, Grant (2006) developed a model of teacher leadership in Africa that included four levels of responsibility, indicating that teachers should first and foremost be leaders in their classrooms, cooperators of their colleagues, contributors to school development, and extenders of their influence beyond the school environment. Riel and Becker (2008) developed a four-level pyramid model of teacher technology leadership, which could be used to guide teachers as they progressed from informal teacher leaders to official teacher leaders in the field of information technology. Zhao (2016) established a teacher instructional leadership model for the eastern world that included the important ingredient of teacher instructional leadership in a higher education context, which was based on his own research. In the study's conclusions, it was discovered that lecturer instructional leadership could be evaluated on three dimensions: leadership characteristics, leading skills, and leadership value.

In studies on teacher leadership perceptions, Angelle and DeHart (2011) discovered that there was a statistically significant difference between teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership and that their perceptions were significantly influenced by school level, teacher's degree, and leadership position. This finding is consistent with that of Smith (2014), who found that veteran administrators, who had been in the job for more than 18 years, had different perceptions of teacher leadership than mid-career administrators, who had been in the job for nine to seventy years, and that veteran administrators had different perceptions of teacher leadership from mid-career administrators. . It is interesting to note that the comments of transitional administrators, who had served for less than eight years, were the most similar to those of the experienced administrators. Teacher leadership was found to differ significantly between preschool and K-3 instructors in various categories, according to the findings (Crosby, 2016).

Only one study can be discovered in the present literature when it comes to defining teacher leadership. The researcher eventually came up with a framework for defining teacher leadership based on the responses of primary school teachers to the definition cards of teacher leadership, which included role orientation, scope of influence and success conditions (Kenjarski, 2015).

It is undoubted that teachers are vital for student learning (Philip, 2021). Several attempts were made to investigate how teacher leadership influences student learning after York-Barr

and Duke's (2004) systematic review on teacher leadership concluded that little solid evidence was provided to prove the impact the teacher leadership exerted on student learning. 'there are many well-reasoned assertions and even some data-based inferences about the effects of teacher leadership on student learning, but little evidence to support them'. For example, Ingersoll, Dougherty, and Sirinides (2017) asserted that the quality of teacher leadership was significantly connected with student competency in math and reading skills. Recently published data indicate that all elements of teacher leadership have a positive association with student learning outcomes, which is consistent with this (Shen, Wu, Reeves, Zheng, Ryan, & Anderson, 2020).

According to the oldest available literature discovered in the eastern countries, undergraduate students observed a statistically significant and positive association between transformational classroom leadership and subsequent leadership outcomes. Therefore, the more frequently teachers engage in transformational leadership inside the classroom, students' perceptions of their teacher's efficacy will improve, and students will be more satisfied with their teacher as a result (Pounder, 2009). According to a recent study, students' commitment to ethical goodness was substantially connected with their perception of their teachers' leadership (Prickett, 2016). Furthermore, the transformative leadership behavior of lecturers resulted in a large increase in student inventiveness (Afshari, Ghavifekr, Parhizkar, and Ayoufu, 2017). Students' creativity was found to be enhanced by the following strategies implemented by class instructors (Banzhuren): 1) moral management; 2) routine management; 3) effective engagement with parents and subject teachers; 4) promotion of student participation. The findings also revealed that class teachers from a variety of various school sizes and with a variety of different working backgrounds all perform the same teacher leadership function in their respective schools (Liu, Liu, & Xie, 2018). However, after investigating the perceptions of elementary school teachers in the United States, it was shown that there was no relationship between the degree of teacher leadership implemented at the school level and student academic attainment (Clark, 2016).

In more recent years, the researchers aimed to investigate how teacher leadership may be used to support student learning. For example, Stiffler (2018) laid the groundwork for a theoretical framework relating to teacher leadership, efficacy beliefs, and student achievement. This theoretical framework depicted the direct and indirect channels for teacher leadership to close the achievement gap in student success levels.

CONCLUSION

The literature review on teacher leadership presented above reveals that the vast majority of studies virtually solely undertaken in qualitative rather than quantitative methods in K-12 settings, which is consistent with the findings of the majority of the research (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Poekert, 2012; Clark, 2016; Nguyen, Harris & Ng, 2019; Shen, Wu, Reeves, Zheng, Ryan, & Anderson, 2020). Furthermore, there has been little investigation into the relationship between teacher leadership and student learning. Thus, the researchers suggest that more large-scale quantitative studies be conducted to explore or explain the nature of relationships that might exist between teacher leadership and student academic achievement.

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