

Editorial:

## **Contemporary Issues in Teacher Leadership: Implications for Knowledge Production and Policy Making**

**Peng Liu<sup>1</sup> and Lei Mee Thien<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, 71 Curry Place Winnipeg, MB, Canada, R3T 2N2

<sup>2</sup>School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Email: peng.liu@umanitoba.ca; thienleimeec@usm.my

### **INTRODUCTION**

Leading from the middle has become an important trend in the education field (Hargreaves, 2023; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2020). As such, teacher leadership is recognised as an important component of school leadership in the field of educational management and leadership studies (Ding & Thien, 2022; Liu, 2021; Shen et al., 2020). Promoting teacher leadership could inform education improvement. The existing knowledge base of teacher leadership focuses on the definitions of teacher leadership and characteristics of teacher leadership as well as the school- and individual-level factors that shape the enactment of teacher leadership (Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The recent literature has shown a paradigm shift in the development of various locally based teacher leadership scales and the impact of local culture on teacher leadership (Pan et al., 2023). The literature suggests further exploration of conceptual clarity, more cross-cultural exploration of teacher leadership studies, investigation of the “dark side” of teacher leadership (Schott et al., 2020), and inquiry into the effects of teacher leadership on student outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). As such, it is time to enrich and expand the teacher leadership literature since tremendous shifts in educational policies and school reform in the 21st century have accelerated the momentum to reshape the global educational landscape. With respect to this concern, this themed issue, “Contemporary Issues in Teacher Leadership: Implications for Knowledge Production and Policy Making” aims to offer new insights to international readers based on robust empirical findings.

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## **OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLES**

The editors are pleased to present this themed issue, which covers important topics in teacher leadership studies that specifically fall into the domains of (1) conceptualisation of teacher leadership, (2) teachers and school administrators' perceptions of teacher leadership, (3) the effects of teacher leadership, (4) contextual factors and their effects on teacher leadership, and (5) the roles of teacher leadership in school and system improvement. This themed issue presents a compilation of efforts contributed by educational management and leadership researchers and practitioners from nine countries, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Qatar, Republic of Korea and the United States.

The first article was written by David Gurr and Darren Nicholas. Its focus concerns the issue with the definitions of teacher leadership and how it causes confusion with research on middle leadership. Gurr and Nicholas have described a leadership influence model that could help to distinguish between the definitions of teacher and middle leadership. Importantly, the proposed leadership model could be used to unify the study of teacher-, middle-, principal-, and distributed leadership. In the second article, Catherine Siew Kheng Chua and Johannah Li Mei Soo have provided a reconceptualisation of teacher leadership in Singapore's digitised educational landscape. This study has addressed the limited research on how ready teachers have been to lead and manage online teaching during and post COVID times. Chua and Soo have further investigated the challenges that Singaporean teachers have faced in enacting e-leadership.

In the third article, Rania Sawalhi discusses the perceptions of teachers and school leaders about teacher leadership in times of uncertainty, igniting the discussion of educational disruption during the pandemic in Qatar. This qualitative study has explored teacher leadership manifestations after schools reopened for onsite teaching and learning. The fourth article was written by Hasan Hariri and colleagues. The study has focused on the investigation of how Indonesian teachers rate themselves as teacher leaders using the Teacher Leadership Self-Assessment (TLSA) instrument via a quantitative approach. In this study, the Indonesian teachers perceived themselves as having high levels of teacher leadership. However, they rarely engaged in the domain of teachers' communication, and it is thus identified as an area for improvement.

In the fifth article, Ezequiel Gomez Caride and Axel Rivas have investigated the relationship between good teachers and teacher leadership in a low-performing school context in Argentina. This study enhances the research in a low-performing school context and contributes to the understanding of the relationship between teachers' professional ability and teacher leadership. The sixth article was written by Jiangang Xia and Sam Butler. The authors have investigated whether teacher leadership practices are different between rural schools and non-rural schools in the United States by using evidence from the large-scale National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) 2020–2021 data. The study has further investigated the relationship between teacher leadership practices and teacher burnout with the moderating effect of school location.

The seventh article focuses on the impact of Korean high school teachers' perceptions of the benefits of participating in professional learning communities (PLCs) on teacher leadership using administrative survey data collected by the Gyeonggi Institute of Education in the Republic of Korea. The authors, Jee Young Lee and colleagues found using multilevel analysis that positive experiences with PLCs can promote teacher leadership both within and beyond the classroom.

In the eighth article, Ahmed Mohamed investigates the influence of principal leadership on teacher leadership through the mediating effect of academic emphasis in Maldivian schools. The findings reveal that principal leadership has a positive direct effect on teacher leadership and academic emphasis. They affirm the role of academic emphasis as a significant mediator between principal leadership and teacher leadership. Meanwhile, in the ninth article, Goh and colleagues explore how collaborative school culture and principal support can influence teacher leadership in Malaysian secondary schools using mixed-methods research design. In this study, the relationship between collaborative school culture and teacher leadership was found stronger when the principals' instrumental support was higher compared to its counterpart. The study found that the impact of collaborative school culture on teacher leadership could be enhanced with support from the local social community, effective communication between leaders and teachers, and teacher engagement in academic and non-academic activities.

In the tenth article, LaSonja Roberts and colleagues report the efforts to develop teacher leadership in a multi-year, large scale project entitled "High-Impact Leadership for School Renewal" and the effects of these efforts. The findings provide practical and policy-making implications for school stakeholders and educational authorities. Both the eleventh and twelfth articles focus on the roles of teacher leadership in school and system improvement. Jingping Sun discusses the implementation and facilitation of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics education (STEAM) taught through project-based learning from the perspective of teacher leadership in an American public-school context. On the other hand, Barbara Brown and Sharon Friesen present a design-based research study based on a two-year design-based professional learning initiative with the goal of building capacity for teacher leaders' instructional leadership and system improvement.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

This themed issue offers a comprehensive overview of recent advancements in the field of teacher leadership studies. It serves as a platform for a thorough exploration of the conceptualisation, antecedents, impacts, and functions of teacher leadership on a global scale. Moreover, it aims to foster the improvement of educational practices both internationally and nationally through the lens of teacher leadership studies. We believe that the articles featured in this themed issue will generate significant interest by contributing novel insights and influencing policy decisions that can shape the future trajectory of teacher leadership research.

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