A Systematic Review on Teacher Leadership of EFL Teachers in Tertiary Education

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ABSTRACT: *This article aims to keep abreast of the latest trend in teacher leadership research globally as well as to identify gaps in the practice of teacher leadership among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instructors in higher education. Firstly, definitions and dimensions of the concept of teacher leadership are systematically reviewed. Secondly, it discusses the importance of teacher leadership to students, colleagues, and the entire school organization. In addition, a review is also conducted to investigate to what extent and in what ways is teacher leadership being studied and practiced among EFL teachers in China tertiary education. Finally, this article poses implications for the practice of teacher leadership of EFL teachers in tertiary education and propose some suggestions to help EFL teachers effectively exercise leadership in the face of the challenges.*

KEYWORDS - *Change-oriented leadership, Cross-cultural leadership, EFL, Information technology leadership, Teacher leadership, Tertiary education.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

"The education terrain is rapidly shifting and the existing structures and boundaries of schooling are fast eroding. Education is being revolutionized through the Internet, Google, outsourcing and 24/7 demands and expectations. Those organizations destined to be 'great' in the rapidly transforming world will be those adept at generating new leadership capacity to meet the changing demands of global schooling." (Harris, 2008, pp. 19)

The world as well as the education field is undergoing a fast pace of change driven by globalization, technological advancements, and a wealth of information. Under this kind of climate, learners have easier access to various learning resources and social networks with just a simple click on the computer while teachers realize that sticking to the fixed mindsets about teaching and learning will eventually enmesh themselves into the pattern of slow death. Therefore, they are supposed to make fundamental shifts to their students, colleagues, even the whole organization in terms of pedagogy, mindset, learning motivation, curriculum, etc. To make these shifts become a reality, however, is never an easy task. It calls on educators to extend the reach of education beyond the walls of the classroom and equip themselves with teacher leadership. Effective teacher leadership, as stated by Ahmed and Qazi (2011), fosters not just the learning motivation of students but also the productivity and advancement of educational institutions.

In the light of this megatrend in global education arena, English language teaching and learning cannot remain untouched. The global expansion and diversification of English urges English instructors to adopt a global mentality, which is characterized as viewing English as more than just a communication tool and cultivating their global leadership. It is essential for English teachers to know that they are not only a language teacher but also a teacher leader. Foreign language teachers need to have a global perspective and be attentive to global affairs and international trends. Additionally, they have the responsibility to recognize and cultivate students' leadership potential and inspire them to take an active part in global issues and develop them into capable communicators and leaders with a competitive edge.

In the realm of education-related studies both domestically and overseas, the investigation of teacher leadership has gained momentum in recent years. The investigation's most salient aspect is that it mostly focused on elementary and secondary school instructors, seldom involving those in tertiary education (Wang, 2012), especially the research on the EFL teacher leadership. Under the megatrend of digital transformation and diversification of educational forms, the current systematic review on both teacher leadership in general and leadership of EFL teachers in tertiary education is conducted to keep abreast of the latest trend in teacher leadership research globally as well as to identify gaps in the practice of teacher leadership among EFL instructors in higher education.

II.　　LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Search Methods

The method used in this review is based on Petticrew and Roberts's (2006) method for executing systematic reviews in the social sciences. This procedure involves several steps. First, research questions were formulated. Second, the search terms were defined and appropriate databases were selected. Third, inclusion and exclusion criteria were formulated, which further guided the literature search. Fourth, the scientific quality of the publications obtained was evaluated using pre-defined quality criteria.

2.2 Guiding Questions

In this review, both empirical and non-empirical researches on the topic of teacher leadership are reviewed, summarized, and coded. It is organized around four questions:

- How is teacher leadership defined?
- What are the dimensions of teacher leadership roles?
- What is the significance of teacher leadership?
- To what extent and in what ways is teacher leadership being studied and practiced among EFL teachers in China tertiary education?

2.3 Inclusion Criteria

The literature search includes sources from 2003 to the present in which teacher leadership is identified as a key term. The reason for the date restriction is that it is hoped that the literature review would help to inform current circumstances, and it is felt that it would be difficult to relate current circumstances to those of over 20 years ago. The second reason is that in the article What Do We Know About Teacher Leadership? Findings from Two Decades of Scholarship York-Barr and Karen Duke have made a comprehensive review of the teacher leadership literature encompassed sources from 1980 to 2004. However, much has changed since then, therefore, a close examination of research that has occurred in the last decade and a half is needed. The researcher uses the following criteria that would allow him to uncover high-quality research that truly focused on teacher leadership (i.e., clear research objective, only teacher leaders, teacher leadership central to research).

2.4 Database

Online library databases were used to locate resources for this study's review of literature. Apart from this resource, the researcher also extensively to make use of other online resources, which together produced documents from various databases such as SAGE, Pro quest, etc (See the Chart). These databases were chosen due to their variety of literature involving both teacher leadership and educational research. In addition, reference lists at the end of key articles were searched for related articles. In order to find the most relevant articles, teacher leadership is identified as a key word. The researcher also uses the combinations of teacher leadership and English language education, teacher leadership in higher education, etc.

Databases Used for Literature Retrieval
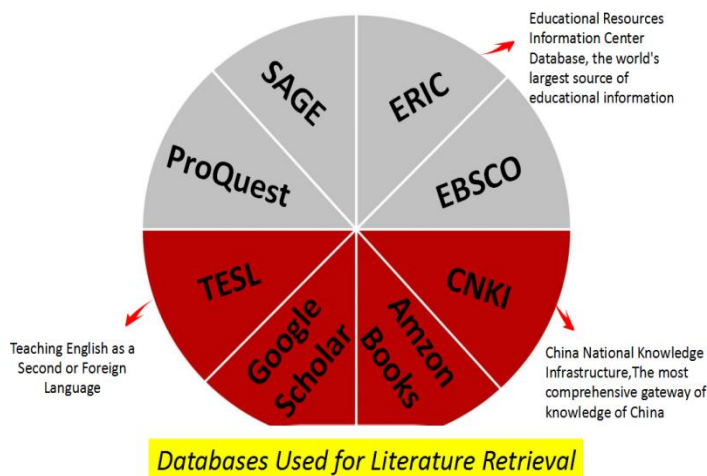
In all, 202 potential sources were reviewed, among which 175 were articles from journals, 17 were books, and 11were dissertations. Roughly sorted by themes, 105 were about teacher leadership, 97 were about English language education and EFL teacher in China higher education.

2.5 Data Extraction

While reading the articles and dissertations concerning teacher leadership, relevant data were extracted. The data extraction form that was used included the following sections:

1)   General information: Study title, author, year of publication, source, document type
2)   Research question
3)   Research method
4)   Theory/Model used
5)   Key findings and implication

2.6 Data Analysis

After having extracted the overall results from the sources concerning teacher leadership, the results were analyzed in more detail to ensure a comprehensive portrayal of the results.

Table 1. Overview of teacher leadership studies in reviewed sources sorted by themes

Theme	Related Articles/Dissertations
1. Individual Level	
personality and behaviors	57
roles, attitudes, conceptualization of TL	5, 18, 46, 59, 61, 62, 82, 90, 93, 94
professional development/professionalism	4, 7, 11, 52, 83
self-efficacy	14
teacher EI(emotional intelligence)	26
motivation	38, 51, 86
teacher resilience/turnover	40, 87
teacher evaluation	44
teacher learning	88
teacher social capital	50
practice/strategies of TL	12, 19, 23, 33, 47, 51, 63, 65, 66, 89
2. Team/Relationship Level	
student and TL	8, 15, 69, 91, 94

teacher collaboration	34, 48, 73, 78
team leadership	49
decision making	56
3. Organizational Level	
organizational factors support/impede TL	12, 24, 46, 51, 83, 94
school culture	4, 9, 32, 35, 41, 60
school structure	20, 79, 92
school leaders' role (principal, administrators, etc.)	28, 30, 31, 48, 89, 95, 26, 55, 75
school leadership preparation programs	45
4. Teacher Leadership Models or Programs	
1, 3, 6, 17, 18, 22, 27, 29, 36, 37, 40, 47, 53, 63, 64, 67, 72, 73, 78	
5. Teacher Leadership Situated in Other Conceptions of Leadership	
•distributed leadership	13, 16,45, 71, 74, 76
•transformational leadership	14, 21, 50, 51, 69, 80, 86, 95
•instructional leadership	54, 68
6. Teacher Leadership in Higher Education	
1, 8, 20, 27, 29, 57, 74, 93, 3, 19, 56, 78	

Note. The numbers mentioned here refer to the identifying articles.

There has been an upward trend in teacher leadership research globally over the past 20 years. According to Wei (2022), transformational leadership, instructional leadership, dispersed leadership, and professional learning communities were the main topics of teacher leadership research. The primary research target areas were teacher leadership's connotation, influencing factors, practical importance, development model, and cultivation.

Next, the four questions, around which this literature review is organized, will be expounded.

Q1: How is teacher leadership defined?

The teacher leadership notion has evolved over time. Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) divide this evolution into three waves. The first wave confined teacher leadership within the formal organizational hierarchy and merely placed the concept close to the teaching function. Teachers who were instructional leaders were positioned in the second wave. Team leader, curriculum developer, and staff development were positions that acknowledged this teacher leader function. The third wave demonstrates a growing recognition that fostering instructional improvement necessitates an organizational culture that encourages cooperation and openness. More recently, the fourth wave has been put forward and explored by scholars, which could include transformational classroom leadership as one of the defining qualities of a teacher leader (Pounder, 2006).

With regard to the definition of leadership, little consensus has been reached regarding what constitutes teacher leadership. Among the 95 sources retrieved, relatively few researchers (n=13; 13.7%) explicitly described how they defined teacher leadership for the purposes of their study. Some just mentioned several other researchers' definitions of teacher leadership briefly. By means of definition extraction, five major themes are identified. The first theme is teacher leadership advocates empowerment (Gonzales & Behar-Horensteinas, 2004). The second theme is that teacher leadership lay emphasis on leading within and beyond the classroom. Muijs et al. (2013) point out one element of teacher leadership is leading across boundaries: classroom boundaries, subject boundaries, team boundaries, and organizational boundaries. The third theme is relationship of influence (Spillane & Coldren, 2011; Torrance et al. 2016). York-Barr and Duke (2004) define teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities" (p.287). The fourth theme that arose from the definitions of teacher

leadership is that the ultimate goal of teacher leadership is system-wide development and change. Torrance and Humes (2015) states that teacher leadership is aimed at engaging teachers 'in a bottom-up approach' to school improvement. The fifth theme highlights the use of teachers' specific expertise and professionalism (Lai & Cheung, 2015).

Q2: What are the dimensions of teacher leadership roles?

When it comes to the notion of "teacher leadership", it is very likely that a large number of teachers will come to the conclusion that teacher leadership requires a formal position in a school with defined responsibilities and authority. This perspective results in a conventionally hierarchical, or vertical, perception of the teacher leader as an officially recognized member of middle management (Gonzales & Behar-Horensteinas, 2004). There is a bewildering array of teacher leadership roles, which can be roughly differentiated into formal and informal leadership roles. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) see teacher leadership as having three main facets: leadership of students or other teachers, leadership of operational tasks, and leadership through decision making or partnership. Levin and Schrum (2016) exemplify the kinds of roles and responsibilities that teacher leaders take up either formally or informally, such as instructional leadership, organizational leadership, and professional leadership.

Q3: What is the significance of teacher leadership?

In terms of the significance of teacher leadership, York-Barr and Duke (2004) concluded that there are many assertions about the potential and intended benefits of teacher leadership in the literature, but there is a dearth of evidence supporting these claims, particularly at the levels of classroom practice and student learning. The same conclusion is true of the current research. Among the reviewed sources, only five pieces of literature (5%) discuss this topic. In contrast, much of the study concerning significance of teacher leadership focus on impact on the teacher leaders, on colleagues, and on school. Findings based on the literature are summarized here from three levels: individual level (impact on teacher leaders themselves), team or relationship level (impact on colleagues and students), organizational level (impact on schools), as is illustrated in the following tables.

Table 2. Impact at individual level

Impact	Examples of Supporting Literature
1. Increased self-efficacy	Frost (2011); Katzenmayer & Moller (2009).
2. Improving teacher retention and resiliency	Yonezawa et al. (2011).
3. Enhancing teacher EI(emotional intelligence)	Wong et al. (2010).
4. Promoting development and sustenance of teacher social capital	Minckler (2014).
5. Overcoming resistance to change	Katzenmayer & Moller (2009).
6. Increased leadership capacity	Smylie & Eckert (2017). Vernon-Dotson & Floyd (2012); Wenner & Campbell (2017).
7. Encouraging professional growth & organizational commitment	Bogler & Somech (2004) Poekert (2012).

Table 3. Impact at team or relationship level

Impact	Examples of Supporting Literature
Impact on students	
1. student satisfaction	Adhikary(2017)
2. initiating students in the development ofself-leadership behavior	Chavez et al. (2017)
3. maximizing student-teacher interaction	Treslan (2006)
4. enhancing student commitment to ethical	Prickett (2016)

goodness	
Impact on colleagues	
5. Colleague relationship shifts that may create challenge	York-Barr &Duke (2004).
6. Shifting from isolation to collaboration	Rasberry & Mahajan (2008) Dove & Honigsfeld (2010)

Table 4. Impact at organizational level level

Impact	Examples of Supporting Literature
1. Bringing structural changes	Rutherford (2006); Hurt (2015).
2. development a shared school vision through co-ordinated improvement efforts	Muijs& Harris (2006).
3. accountability for results	Katzenmayer& Moller (2009). Muijs& Harris (2006).

Q4: To what extent and in what ways is teacher leadership being studied and practiced among EFL teachers in China tertiary education?

Wang (2012) investigates the process by which foreign language teachers develop their professional leadership, identifies the forces that support and obstruct it, and looks for a feasible strategy. One of the findings is that their personality appeal and teaching leadership have a considerable impetus, while organizational coherence and learning momentum (capacity for growth) are rather weak. Wang (2019) analyzes the concept of foreign language teachers' curriculum leadership, and discusses its role in student foreign language acquisition as well as how to enhance curriculum leadership. Tan (2020) examines the professional leadership of foreign language instructors in Shanxi higher education institutions. The findings reveal that they are less enthusiastic about teaching innovation and are used to employing traditional teaching approaches. Moreover, some instructors lack the initiative to update their professional knowledge. Both mutual influence and learning motivation are lacking among foreign language educators. Zeng and Zhang (2022) conduct a study on the strategies for developing teaching leadership of foreign language instructors in higher education institutions under the background of new liberal arts. They assume that the generation of teaching leadership among foreign language instructors in higher education institutions requires policy support from both the school and educational authorities, along with active cultivation of subjective initiative through learning and exploration.

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP OF EFL TEACHERS IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

With the deep integration of educational informatization and college English teaching, as well as the trend of interdisciplinary integration, traditional English teaching mindset is no longer able to meet the needs of the era. EFL teachers need to develop new leadership capacity to meet the changing demands of global English. Based on the above literature review, the following three leadership capacity are what EFL teachers are in desperate need of: Change-oriented leadership, Information technology (digital) leadership, and Cross-cultural leadership.

3.1 Change-oriented leadership

Firstly, EFL teachers should change their mindset about leadership. Some EFL teachers resist the label of teacher leaders because their understanding of leadership was grounded in a formal and hierarchical view of leaders' work. However, the fact is, teacher leaders can lead in a school without a formal position title. Katzenmayer and Moller (2009) believes that within every school there is a sleeping giant of teacher leadership that can be a strong catalyst for making changes. We can arouse this sleeping giant of teacher leadership by assisting EFL teachers in realizing their own potential as leaders, providing them with opportunity to grow as leaders, and fostering leadership-friendly school environments. Therefore, the top priority for the EFL teachers who want to become a change agent is to change their teacher leadership mindset as deep change begins with a state of mind. When teachers recognize that they can be leaders and accept a leading role from among the array of roles available to them, positive results will follow. Secondly, EFL teachers should change their teaching approaches and philosophy. Leading others begins with leading self. When confronted with constant changes in EFL education, instead of avoiding them or sticking to old-fashioned teaching approaches, EFL teachers should overcome resistance to change and model the way by constantly innovating and updating their teaching, for example, employing blended teaching methods.

3.2 Information technology (digital) leadership

In the era of informatization and intelligence, multimedia technology, as well as modern information technologies such as big data, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, have emerged as indispensable tools for foreign language teaching. College English teachers should keep abreast of the latest trends, embrace and use these technologies reasonably, actively promote the deep integration of modern information technology into the teaching and learning process, and continuously enhance their awareness, knowledge, and ability to use information technology. On the other hand, it requires EFL teachers to be able to use information technology to obtain and organize the necessary information resources, to have a certain level of information discernment ability, being able to extract relevant information from a vast amount of data, and then process and apply this information to teaching.

3.3 Cross-cultural leadership

Recent years have seen an increase in international exchanges in the areas of science and technology, education, and other fields as a result of China's ongoing promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative. Foreign languages, which serve as the primary language for international communication, have contributed significantly to both national development and global communication (Tan, 2020). Therefore, EFL instructors in colleges and universities urgently need to improve their cross-cultural leadership. First, enhancing cross-cultural awareness. EFL teachers need to fully recognize the importance of cross-cultural communication, understand the differences and commonalities between different cultures, respect and accept different cultural concepts and

customs. Second, improving cultural adaptability. EFL teachers need to have the ability to adapt and respond to multicultural environments, including understanding social norms, etiquette habits, communication methods, etc. of different cultures, in order to better integrate into different cultural environments. Third, developing cross-cultural communication skills. EFL teachers need to have fluent and accurate cross-cultural communication skills, be able to teach accurately and fluently in the target language, and master some cross-cultural communication skills to better communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Fourth, enhancing teamwork skills. EFL teachers need to have the ability to collaborate with people from different cultural backgrounds, including skills in teamwork, coordination and communication, and conflict resolution.

IV.   CONCLUSION

The overall international research on teacher leadership shows a steady upward trend in the past two decades while study conducted pertaining to the EFL teacher leadership in China higher education is rarely touched. Much content should be emphasized in future EFL teacher leadership research, including its barricading forces, diverse dimensions, how different leadership types influence students' learning, the paths by which EFL teachers develop their professional leadership, etc.

V.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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