



Teacher Leadership in School Management: A Critical Review of Roles, Responsibilities, and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Teacher leadership has been an emerging component of how schools operate well and transform the educational landscape in India. This review assessed the evolving role, responsibilities, and challenges for teacher leaders in Indian Schools. This study examined opportunities for teacher leadership to enhance systemic improvement in schools, student learning, and teacher professional development through the analysis of a large body of existing literature and contextually recognizing the complexity of India's multi-faceted system of education. It illustrated important opportunities for school management effectiveness from teacher leadership and suggested important areas to address future research and policy efforts.

Introduction

Teacher leadership is a topic that has received considerable interest in educational research and practice across the globe. In India, there is so much to learn about where teacher leadership could lead the school sector and the potential efficiencies in teaching and learning. Teacher leadership expands far beyond the classroom. It involves the role of teaching and includes responsibility in curriculum design, facilitating, implementation of policies, and actualising change in the organisation (Muijs & Harris, 2003). In India a country with many challenges to deal with in the field of education, such as lack of resources and schoolage children from different educational/cultural backgrounds and experiences, teacher leadership



presents distinct opportunities and challenges. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places the importance of professional development and empowering teachers, regarding them as crucial agents for change (Ministry of Education, 2020). In light of this policy shift, it is becoming more apparent to people across the education sector that effective school leadership requires model of leadership based on distributed leadership that utilises teachers' strengths, knowledge, and competencies at all levels of the education system.

This review aims to critically examine the current research on teacher leadership in Indian school leadership, exploring the nature, roles, responsibilities and challenges to assess the potential to strengthen and expand. The article identifies literature, policy papers and empirical investigations to provide a comprehensive examination of the meaning teacher leadership in schools in India.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Teacher Leadership

York-Barr and Duke (2004) define teacher leadership as a process in which teachers influence the teaching and learning of coworkers, principals, and other key players. In India, this concept has shifted from an older hierarchical structure to a collaborative model where teachers are seen as leaders and change agents in education. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) state that teacher leadership has three primary components including leading students, leading classmates, and leading the profession. These three elements become critical in school systems in India, since teachers are often expected to do much more than just teach in the classroom. Teachers may also be expected to work within the community, work closely with curricular frameworks to provide direction for important shifts in curriculum, and also enact policies.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teacher Leaders in Indian Schools

Instructional Leadership

Teacher leaders in Indian schools are key design players in enhancing teaching practices in the course of curriculum development, pedagogical processes, and assessment methods. Sharma and Jangira (2015) have documented that teacher leaders enhance the quality of teaching through modelling, supporting peers and developing collaborative professional learning teams. Two things have happened in the last 20-30 years that have complicated teacher leaders in Indian schools: the Right to Education Act (2009)



which hold teachers accountable for inclusive practices and the notion of a teacher leader. Teacher leaders will have to know about various learning styles and how to teach for various learning styles. The Act has opened up pedagogical possibilities for teachers to lead in areas such as teaching students with special needs, culturally diverse students, and participating in their community.

Mentoring and Professional Development

Mentoring is an essential element of becoming a teacher leader in Indian education systems, especially because of the large influx of beginning teachers into the profession. Experienced teacher leaders serve as mentors to assist in the many areas, including classroom management, implementation and curricular responsibilities, and professional growth (Pandey and Sharma, 2018). In India, the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) system has increasingly relied on teacher leaders to deliver professional development programs in their districts.

Curriculum Development and Implementation

Teacher leaders play a very critical role in adapting and implementing the curriculum particularly in relation to what the students require and local situations. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 highlighted the need for teachers' participation in designing the curriculum because they are in a unique position to understand how learning happens with students and make sense of the local school conditions (NCERT, 2005).

School Improvement and Change Management

Teacher leaders are change agents that improve schools in data collection, action research, and collaborative planning for actions. Kumar and Singh (2019) reported that schools that engaged in teacher leadership had more positive outcomes for students and organizational effectiveness compared to traditional hierarchical organisations.

Challenges Facing Teacher Leaders in Indian Schools

Structural and Organizational Barriers

Many Indian schools are set up in a way that makes it hard for teachers to become leaders. Traditional power systems often limit teachers' freedom and ability to make decisions, which makes it harder for them to try new things or lead change (Ramachandran et al., 2018).



Another big problem is that administrators don't want to use distributed leadership models. A lot of school administrators don't want to give teachers the power to make decisions because they see it as a danger to their power instead than a chance to make the school better.

Resource Constraints

A relevant problem with many school districts in India is the lack of economic resources and materials, which can serve as a barrier for teacher leaders to take the lead on improvement work. According to Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2020), the lack of technology, bad infrastructure, limited budget for teacher professional development and not enough money challenges teachers being strong leaders.

Professional Development Limitations

One of the biggest issues is there are very few professional development opportunities that specifically help teachers develop as leaders. India provides many teacher training programmes; however, very few focus on developing leadership qualities, working together, or managing change (Sriavasava & Hopwood, 2019).

Cultural and Social Factors

Cultural standards and social institutions may make it challenging for teachers to be leaders, especially for female teachers and educators from marginalized identities. While women are a significant portion of the teaching workforce (Patel & Srivastava, 2020), gender bias in educational leadership positions negatively impacts female teacher leaders seeking employment in leadership roles. Teacher leaders who practice in multilingual contexts face additional barriers due to language and cultural differences between regions. Leaders must navigate multiple languages, cultural standards, and local expectations for schools, which is not currently well-explained or modelled in existing training.

Policy Context and Support Systems

National Education Policy 2020

The NEP 2020 provides a lot of authority, freedom, and possibility for learning to teachers, and importantly, it grants a lot of power and autonomy to teachers. This policy indicates that teachers are "at the centre of the learning process" and calls for substantial investments in the development of teachers and growing their leadership potential (Ministry of Education, 2020). Policy features include Teacher



Education Universities, improved pay, recognition systems, and more professional growth opportunities. Overall, these policy changes help teachers to become leaders by removing many institutional barriers that inhibit them from doing so.

State-Level Initiatives

Different state governments have started teacher leadership programmes, but some have worked better than others. The Rajasthan Teacher Leadership Programme and Kerala's School Leadership Development Initiative are two good examples of how states are investing in strengthening teachers' skills (Mathew, 2021).

Professional Organizations and Networks

Professional associations for teachers, such as All India Primary Teachers' Federation and subject-based associations, have been a way for teachers to meet and develop as leaders. They facilitate the sharing of knowledge, professional development, and advocacy for improved working conditions and recognition.

Impact and Outcomes

Research shows that Indian schools with good teacher leadership have better student outcomes, happier teachers, and a more successful organisation. According to Joshi and Ahuja (2020), schools with strong teacher leadership have:

- Higher test scores for students
- Higher rates of teacher retention
- A better culture of collaboration
- More effective implementation of educational reforms
- More involvement from parents and the community

Future Scope and Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

Formal role descriptions, career development and pay frameworks, should clarify that educational policies acknowledge teacher leadership roles and support their advancement, especially in terms of guidance and accountability. Teacher Leader certification programs could provide teacher leaders with



distinctive recognition and credibility as potential leaders and assurance that quality stipulations for teachers' work are being met.

Professional Development Initiatives

Professional development programs absolutely should expand at both the national and state level to serve teachers who see themselves as leaders. The programs should teach how to be leaders, deal with change, cooperate and motivate, and how to innovate.

Research Priorities

Future research should concentrate longitudinal studies about how teacher leadership impacts student outcomes, organizational effectiveness, and educational justice. In order to further our understanding of what works and how to implement it, comparative studies could study schools and states in India.

Technology Integration

Using technology to support educators as leaders through distance learning platforms, online collaboration tools, and sharing of digital materials may alleviate geographic and resource challenges, while also improving leadership skills.

Conclusion

Teacher leadership is a vital aspect of effective school management in India. It has tremendous potential to improve schools and school systems. While there will always be traditional challenges related to institutional barriers, limited resources and cultural issues, the policy environment and emphasis on teacher quality have created opportunities for teachers to assume greater leadership roles. For teacher leadership programs to be successful, they rely on substantial support, including professional development opportunities, policy support and adjustments to the institutional culture. Therefore, developing and sustaining teacher leaders who will achieve meaningful school improvement requires collaboration among educational leaders, legislators and researchers. As India strives to fulfil its ambition of improving and reforming education, teacher leadership will become increasingly important. Supporting teacher leadership, therefore, is not just an investment in teacher careers and support for their own professional learning, but ultimately a means to contribute to the development of an equitable, high quality education system for all children. The research shows that teacher leaders can achieve significant improvements in the quality of teaching, pupil outcomes, and organisational performance if they are



equipped with appropriate support and influence. But to get there, all parties will need to remain committed and be willing to challenge conventional hierarchical arrangements in favour of more collaborative and distributed leadership styles.

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