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**TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND ITS ROLE FOR TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AND**

**STUDENT LEARNING**

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By

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

**Backround on the importance of teacher leadership**

They always say that the country’s pillar of success can be view based on the quality of its education. For many, it is pivotal for the country to invest in education sector to ensure that its people can be able to attain a desirable employment and standard of living for themselves. That is why for the past decade we witness how the Philippine government restructured multiple times its basic educational system and continue to search for possible upgrade needed in the prevalent state of education in the Philippines. The latest is the implementation of K-12 program whose goal is add an additional two-year in basic schooling as senior high school and the inclusion of technical and vocational courses as part of the option especially to those students not planning to go to college, thus it will give them opportunities to be employed blue-collar work. The new curriculum was introduced and started in 2011 by Former DepEd secretary Armin Luistro. It has been a challenge but a strategic move on the part of the government because the successful implementation of the K to 12 programs in the country will ensure that our educational system can be able to produce graduates who are globally competent that are capable to get employed because they have skills needed to fulfil the pillars of globalized world.

However, despite the effort of the government to reform the Philippine education system for the past two decades, same issues and concerns are still blocking the way in achieving the quality yet affordable education in the country. In the 15-year Education for all (EFA) global movement, it highlighted the common problems in the Philippine education system like for example, the poor school infrastructure and lack of maintenance. However, there is an alarming report made by UNESCO on 2015 because it includes teachers as one of the problem. They explained that actual learning was not fully maximize as compared to the official intended instructional time set by the Department of Education (DepEd) because of teachers’ absenteeism, late arrival and skipping class. In addition, we could assume that teachers are part of the reason why the Philippine government failed to make the mark in achieving the goals and ideals of *Education For All 2015* primarily in our pledged to achieve universal primary education. Therefore, we cannot disintegrate certain realities that teachers are part of the problem in our longstanding battle to improve the quality of education in the Philippines. But most importantly, teachers are also the primary agent for this goal to set in fruition and one of the solutions that I will be arguing in this paper is promoting teacher leadership in the school could be of help to address the problem. Therefore, this paper seeks to understand through the help of a growing body of research on the definition of teacher leadership and its importance on teacher development and student learning. Furthermore, it also examines the connection of teacher leadership and the concept of distributed leadership as catalyst for change in the school.

The subject of leadership has been of interest to scholars and practitioners for over two-thousand years. Since the writing of Art of War of Lao Tzu’s and Sun Tzu’s, through the works of Plato and Aristotle in Ancient Greece, Machievelli in 16th century Italy, to the plethora of gurus in management and leadership, people have endeavoured to convey what it takes to be a great leader and the contribution that leadership can make to groups and societies. However, a body of research suggests that the trend on teachers’ differing roles, especially increased leadership roles has led to school development and change. For example, in the study conducted by Crowther, et al (2002), it showed that successful reform in school cannot be separated fromteacher leadership. It is deemed critical for the capacity of the school to enhance its own improvement and development basically due to the fact that there is a need to counter the limitations provided by the prevalent leadership in the school organization as part of its inherent potential (Frost and Durrant, 2003). The shift on teacher leadership in school will break the notions that roles, power, and positions are always synonymous to leadership. Moreover, a study of teacher leadership as a series of researches have highlighted is a very much sensible need on the school community.

In my five years of teaching, it has been my perception that school leadership and school reform is an important function intended for the principal, thus, its exercise is limited to the privileged and few. Moreover, in the past two decades, principal leadership has been addressed as the centre of school leadership supported by readings: Different leadership practices on principalship (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson and Jinks, 2007); Enacting principal leadership (Lai, Edith, 2014); Models for successful leadership (Browne-Ferrigno and Fusarelli, 2006; Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford, 2007); and impact of principal leadership on student learning (Hallinger and Leithwood, 2006; Katterfeld, 2013; Blank, 2015; and Addison, 2009). However, upon exploring the literature, there are enough theories and paradigms in the literature that will support teacher leadership and recognizes the important contribution of teachers and what excellent teachers can bring in the table particularly in demonstrating leadership capabilities. Teacher leadership has been addressed from different standpoints: development and validation of its conceptual framework (Poekert, Alexandrou and Shannon, 2016; Baecher, 2012; hanzicker, 2017; York-Barr and Duke, 2004); implementation of teachers who are leaders in the school (Mullen and Jones, 2014; Fairman and Mackenzie, 2012; Liljnberg, 2016); perceptions on teacher leadership (heikka, Halttunen, Waniganayake, 2016; Fairman and Mackenzie, 2014).

Before I started in a public school system a year ago, it has been part of my notion that a career principal is the paramount answer to the problems confronting educational system in the Philippines but one of the challenges that I encountered when I entered the public school system was the lack of continuous systematic leadership, and upon interviewing my colleagues, one answer had been consistent is the lack of continuity when it comes to school improvement plan because different principal means different plans or programs for the schools.Currently, I realize how limited my perspective was and the need to be more sensible because in actuality, there are many challenges that a school principal could not figure out because it is already beyond his power and control especially them have limited tenure. Therefore, critical capacity of the teachers who are consider themselves as leadersis vital in continuous school improvement because as compared to principal they stay longer in their respective school assignment. Teachers are in the best position for capacity building needed for so that development and improvement really occurs in a public school system. As Danielson (2006) pointed out teachers hold the institutional memory and not the administrators due to their tenure. He also added that teachers have the needed expertise. Moreover, as part of “Danielson’s framework to develop teachers leaders” he outline the following reasons why there is what he called “impossible principalship”: First, he argued that the principal is the point person for accountability; Second, the range of conceptualizations of the principalship indicates its complexities; Third, there are enormous bureaucratic and administrative requirements; and lastly, principals cannot be expert in everything (Hunzicker, 2017). According to Institute for education leadership (2001), in terms of student learning, there are already widely supported researchers that agreed to the conviction that high quality teachers help students learn best and in the past years, it is been the teacher leadership that has gathered recent momentum as an important facet in the enhancement and advancement of teachers’ quality (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett and Roberts, 2010). In addition, in the educational discourse for the advancement of professionalize teaching and reform schools, teacher leadership has become the crucial factor (Billingsley, 2007; Little, 2003; Smylie, 1995).

Lastly, researchers like York-Barr and Duke (2004) and Harris and Mujis (2005), have been persistently backing of the teacher leadership due to the assumption that if there are schools’ stakeholder who are directly involved in classroom instruction that can make crucial and vital distinction on student learning, it’s the TEACHERS. As front liners, they have the grasp in schools’ culture, classroom affairs and the kind of support they need to do their jobs.

**Defining Teacher leadership: wrestled with the definitions and conceptualization of teacher leadership, TEACHERS could be a LEADER inside and outside of their classroom (Formal and Informal leadership)**

The term teacher leadership could be originated from the professionalization discussion conducted for the last two decades. Thus, for almost two decades, teacher leadership as a concept for leadership is not new (Frost, 2012). However, the role of teacher most often centred on its traditional function to teach, to facilitate and to assess, and leadership tends to be neglected because there is no consensus in terms of elaborated concept and in operation of teacher leadership (Leonard, Petta, and Porter, 2012). Another gap with the literature in terms of defining teacher leadership is that it is considered by many to be just an extension term encompassing a variety of teacher roles and there is a minor consensus exists on how to define teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). As former Civil Service Commision Chair Francisco Duque III during in one of his speech defined teacher-leaders as “means of empowering teachers to become agents of change by allowing them to continuously find ways to improve their teaching as that of their colleagues, to participate in decision-making, and mentor fellow teachers to explore ways on how their school can contribute to the community”. More recently, Danielson (2006) defines teacher leadership as those who continue to teach while influencing practices of other teachers in other classrooms. With all the definition given above, there is a convincing aspect on the definition given by York-Barr and Duke (2004) and it summed up on the following key features: First, it is a collective process by which teachers help themselves in improving their teaching and learning practices. Thus, leadership does not reside solely in principal. Second, since they teachers, principal and other members of school community are task to influence each other, a sense of community prevails and a climate of trust exists. And lastly, leadership may be exercised through formal and even in informal roles. Regardless of the different definitions adopted for teacher leadership, still teacher leadership is a big help for the school continuous improvement plan to succeed. As Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) mentioned, “When given the opportunities to lead, teachers can influence school reform efforts. Waking this sleeping giant of teacher leadership has unlimited potential in making a real difference in the pace and depth of school change” (p. 102). Regardless of numerous notions about how to define teacher leadership, TEACHERS are the centre of teacher leadership. Teacher leadership can take place in all facets of school experiences – from the teaching and learning processes inside the classroom, to the conduct of school programs and the implementation of school-wide policies and in civic engagement and community extension (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett and Roberts, 2010). Furthermore, teacher leadership is more than the formal leadership roles that tend to dominate the field (e.g. head teachers, master teachers, parent-teacher association, preservice teacher partnerships, and principal). Danielson (2006) who supported informal leadership stressed out that teacher leaders’ first responsibility is to his/her students. Nonetheless, regardless of job title and its corresponding duties and responsibilities, teachers can also call themselves leaders by their informal work as manifested in their day to day interactions with their students, co-teachers and superior.

**II. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

**Potential benefits of teacher leadership on teacher development and student learning**

In support to the main assumption of this paper, I summarized into four categories the advantages of teacher leadership as described by York-Barr and Duke (2004) supported by the research conducted in teacher leadership. The three advantages listed below are in the teacher development while the last advantage is on the effect of TL on student learning.  
 The first benefit is that teacher leadership promotes commitment, responsibility, and accountability on the community of teachers (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett and Roberts, 2010). By use of TL, teachers could realize their integral part in what is happening in the schools and their active engagement and contribution is vital in the success of the school’s organization. Several studies reveal that it is often perceived in the school that participating in decision-making process is often exclusive in principal and middle leaders and teachers are just passive recipient of the decisions made by the school administrators. However, Barth, 2001 argued that teacher leadership provide opportunities for the teachers to become committed to the decision making process and through hard work can work in the implementation and eventually it can lead to fostering teacher empowerment. Further, even the informal but solution-based dialogues among teachers, which can be an essential quality of teacher leaders could be capable in accomplishing the task to unify mandated teachers organizations that is based on the culture informed decision-making (York-Barr and Duke, 2004).

In “Teacher Leadership enactment in Professional learning community contexts: towards a better understanding of the phenomenon” a research conducted by Hairon, Goh and Chua (2015), they highlight the close relationship between teacher leadership and teacher learning in communities (e.g. PLC), they pointed out that in the exercise of teacher leadership in a PLC as an ideal site, teachers and to how they interact with their co-workers, collaborative or collective engagement, and learning with the intention of bringing improvements in teaching practices and student learning has been observed. It asserted that teacher leadership assumes teachers to be catalysts for change and development towards a commitment to shared collaborative learning in a community (Harris, 2005).

In “Exploring the connections and between Action Research and Teacher Leadership: A reflection on teacher-leader research for confronting new challenges”, it explored the conceptualization of teacher leadership as Wolkenhauer, Hill, Dana and Stukey, 2016 writes:

“Teacher leaders would slide their classroom doors open to collaborate with other teachers, to discuss common problems, to share approaches to various learning situations, to explore ways to overcome the structural constraints of limited time, space, resources and restrictive policies, and/or to investigate motivational strategies to bring students to a deeper engagement with learning.”

Second, teacher leadership will provide opportunities for the teachers not just serve as models and mentors to their respective learners but to their colleagues as well, and in the process continue to learn themselves (Barth, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1988; Ovando, 1996; Porter, 1986; Ryan, 1999). So far, possibly the compelling outcome of teacher leadership are on the teacher themselves (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett and Roberts, 2010). Most importantly, in schools who have teacher leaders reported a significant advancement on the additional areas, such as instruction, because of exposure to recent information and learning options. (Ovando, 1996; Porter, 1986; Smylie 1994).

Third, teacher leadership showed a growing teacher opportunities for advancement by acknowledging and rewarding the teachers’’ expertise and dedication (Hart, 1995). It is simple for the administrators and peers to acknowledge the essential contributions of the teachers when they step in on roles intended for teacher leaders. For example, in a study of 76 school heads, they uttered that the success of their schools would be impossible if they did not have teacher leaders (Institute for Educational leadership, 2008). Such acknowledgement can lead to job advancement or a sense of renewal (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000). Finally, the advantage accrues the students, not only through improved instruction, but also by providing students with affirmative example of leadership and ideal look of collective responsibility in a community environment (Jackson, Burrus, Bassett and Roberts, 2010).

Fourth, teacher leaders and its effect on student learning. As explained by Reeves (2009) in his study entitled, “Leading change in your school: How to conquer myths, build commitment, and get results”:

“The kinds of teachers needed are the igniters and catalyst who can create situations where school community members build on each others’ effort to create the vision of the whole school (Lambert, 2003a). For example, describes how in one school system low test scores convinced veteran high school teachers that they all had to play a part in improving the school. They adjusted schedules so some students had more class time, studied and implemented effective strategies, and committed to teaching students who needed more support. This kind of collective commitment is real teacher leadership”.

**Teacher leadership and its connection to Distributed Leadership**

As you go on different international literature on teacher leadership, it is apparent that there are overlapping and competing definitions on the term. Therefore, most often than not it is a source of difficulty to pursuit of legitimacy within the leadership field because of the conceptual confusion. In the exercise of leadership by teachers, position or designation does not matter. In summary, teacher leadership is centrally concerned with forms of empowerment and institution which are also at the heart of distributed leadership theory (Harris, 2010). It is clearly showed in the research that teachers’ leadership role may extend to their contribution to the school climate and culture; there are also studies on magnifying the relationship between teacher leadership and distributed leadership theory. Although, this has not been explored in depth, yet it is clear that there are clear links between teacher leadership and distributed leadership (Bush and Glover, 2013). There are many possible, and competing, models of school leadership (Bush and Glover) but most of it is essentially about individual (usually principal) leadership and some of the models of leadership are: instructional leadership (Terosky, 2016; Schmidt, 2013; and Gobler, 2013), authentic leadership (Zhang, Everett, Elkin and Cone, 2012; Lishchinsky and Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015), managerial leadership (Steers, Sanchez-Ronde, Nardon, 2012; Meyer, 2014; Ruiz, Hamlin and Carioni, 2016), Transformational leadership, Kirby, Paradise, and King, 2010), and Moral leadership (Grover, 2013; Maguad and Krone, 2009, Wong, 2009) and among the models of leadership mentioned above, distributed leadership is popular in the concept of teacher leadership because it accords with the notion that values should be shared by teacher professionals and other adults in schools (Bush and Glover). In summary, distributed leadership concerns on producing and building a community of teachers that is continuous on fostering their leadership potentials for the improvement of the school where they belong. Teacher as valuable member of the school are capable of leading and helping to improve the performance of their school whatever roles or positions they characterized. Teacher leadership and its capacity to distribute leadership in the schools helps to counter the traditional model of leadership that we used to, wherein principal and its middle managers are the sole responsible for making decision. In this kind of leadership, the school is departing from the view that leadership resides in one person to form an institution who are more collaborative and shared that can lead to change and development.The assumption is that distributed leadership is impossible to take into fruition without recognizing the need to transform teachers as leaders in the school community.Therefore; it also takes a closer look on the relationship of distributed leadership model and of a teacher leadership. As pointed out it is difficult for teacher leaders to maximize their leadership potential by not embedding on their practices within the perspective of distributed leadership. As Bush and Glover (2014) suggested that teacher leader must be conceptualized based on the framework of shared and collective leadership. Thus, Team leadership over solo leadership.

Harris (2010) further supported the assumption by explaining that the concept of distributed leadership uphold that schools ‘decentre’ the leader. Remember that teacher leadership denied the assumption that school leadership is synonymous with the principals and middle managers, and in a way, it resulted to schools most often disregarded alternative references on leadership. In this sense leadership is more appropriately understood as ‘ﬂuid and emergent, rather than a ﬁxed phenomenon’ (Gronn, 2000).This paper identified four (4) essential features that are both present in Teacher Leadership and Distributed Leadership. First, leadership does not reside solely with the Principal. It contemplates the perspective that every person in one way or another can demonstrate leadership (Goleman 2002). We are not saying that all are leaders because not everyone is a leader, or should be, however, we should be open also on the possibility of a more collective sense of leadership. Gronn (2000) views leadership as more of a collective phenomenon where ‘leadership is present in the course of activities in which a set of organisation members discover themselves entangled’. This lead to second feature which is leadership sees as part of an on-going learning and it is considered to be the norm for teachers and students. Distributed leadership makes sense when it is certainly make better in imparting considerable conceptual clarity about the vast concept of teacher leadership for three main important reasons:Firstly, includes institutional action wherein a lot of teachers who belong to various group are deployed in task to work collectively in the instructional change process (Spillane, 2001). For example, is the learning action cell session (LACs) conducted in the public school, it aimed to provide teachers a platform where they can discourse their different successful strategies or pedagogies they maximized or utilized in their teaching process. It also served as platform for planning for continuous improvement of their instructional process.Secondly, it counter the traditional view on leadership and instead create an implication on what Spillane (2001) described as “social distribution leadership” in which leadership function is hand over to number of individuals who are able to fulfilled and accomplished the task. In this set-up, multiple leaders arise and their cohesive interaction to complete the task transforms the organizational leadership as shared and collective. This set up is what need most particularly, in a public school set-up wherein leadership must be distributed for a more systematic and cohesive implementation of school programs and policies. Thirdly, it makes leadership interdependent rather a dependent one because leaders regardless of kinds and roles can embrace and maximize their fullest potentials for a shared responsibility. So regardless of what teacher leadership we wish to adopt, one thing is certain, it must and always reflected in theory of distributed leadership because it gives importance on collective action, empowerment and culture of shared and collective vision**.** So it goes on the third key features, the sense of community prevails and a climate of trust exists. Teacher leadership is anchored on the notion that all members of the organization are valuable and have a potential to become a leader and that leadership is a form of agency that be distributed or shared.Lastly, leadership in Teacher leadership and distributed leadership may be exercised through formal and informal positions. It is fundamentally connected to Sergiovanni’s (2001) concept of ‘leadership density’ is also certainly helpful here. He claimed that high number of teachers who engage themselves in leadership means that numerous individuals are included, trusted, and exposed to current trends and active participation in terms of creating and transferring the acquired knowledge.

**CONCLUSION**

After the review of literature in Teacher leadership, it is clear to me that TLs role begins in the classroom with the influence they have on the students but also extends beyond the classroom to work collaborate with colleagues. In addition, being a teacher, an educator, or a member of an academe is both a demanding challenge and a privilege. Therefore, it is our responsibility to improve our professional capability to better serve the students and teachers becoming leader has a crucial role to set that in fruition. The inclusion of teacher leadership in the school is an exciting yet challenging but studies indicated that teacher leadership can led to teacher development and enhancement of student learning. It will lead us to take advantage the “sleeping giant” in the schools, which are the teacher. Empowered teachers are the sleeping giant in the school because if given an enough opportunities for teacher development, they are capable

to unchain a significant capacity for school improvement and for the students to develop excellence among themselves and give them a better opportunites to have a better future.Teacher leadership provides the following: it affirmed that leadership does not sole burden of the Principal, it promotes on-going learning that can be part of teachers and students norms, in teacher leadership, a sense of community prevails and a climate of trusts exists, and leadership style may be exercised through formal positions and informal roles.

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