

## THE RESTRICTED REALITY OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP: A SOUTH AFRICAN SURVEY

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*(Paper in progress)*

### ABSTRACT

Located within international traditions of distributed leadership theory and global trends on teacher leadership, this paper explores, in a local context, how teachers perceive teacher leadership and determines the extent to which teachers are involved in leadership roles across a range of schools of diverse cultures and contexts. Replicating a local study, the quantitative data on which this paper is based was gathered from a survey which used a closed questionnaire which was administered to 1055 post level one teachers in 3 districts in KwaZulu-Natal. Data from the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences and interpreted within a conceptual framework of zones and roles of teacher leadership (Grant, forthcoming).

This paper describes the three key findings from this research. Firstly, teachers supported the notion of shared leadership and believed that teachers were able and equipped to lead. Secondly, teachers were involved in leadership, mainly within their classrooms and to a lesser degree beyond their classrooms as they collaborated with other teachers in curricular and extra-curricular activities. There was substantially less teacher leadership in relation to school-wide as well as community issues. Finally, the SMTs were considered the main barrier to teacher leadership because of their lack of trust in teachers and because they did not involve teachers in decision-making. These findings were similar to those of the original research and the local case study research to date on teacher leadership. Overall, the paper highlights the restricted nature of teacher leadership in the majority of our KZN schools but argues, never-the-less, for the central role of teachers as leaders working collaboratively from within schools to bring about improvement.

Key words: teacher leadership, delegation, distributed leadership

### WHAT IS TEACHER LEADERSHIP?

There appears to be little agreement on the exact definition of the term teacher leadership and we agree with Wigginton (1992), cited in Murphy (2005), that teacher leadership is devilishly complicated and the phrase itself is frustratingly ambiguous. Given the contested nature of the terrain, and for the purposes of this paper, we work with the definition of teacher leadership by Harris and Lambert (2003) which is that, in essence, teacher leadership is a model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organisation have the opportunity to lead. The main idea underpinning this view is that leadership is not only individual or positional but instead is a group process in which a range of people can participate. Teacher leadership has as its core “a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p.43). A further comment which needs to be made at this point is that teacher leadership is an emergent process rather than something that can be forced from the top in an autocratic manner. Gronn emphasises this emergent aspect of leadership when he argues for the “abandonment of fixed leader-follower dualisms in favour of the possibility of multiple, emergent, task-focused roles” (2000, p.325).

Writing about teacher leadership in the context of the United States, Katzenmeyer and Moller contend that “educational policy is easier to change than schools are” (2001, p.1). The same can be said for the South African context. While we have a range of very progressive educational policies, post 1994 [see for example the *South African Schools’ Act* (1996), the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000) and the *Task Team Report on Education Management* (1996)], which create the space for teacher leadership to emerge in

schools, changes in leadership practice in schools are the exception rather than the norm. Silences in these policy documents about what teacher leadership entails as well as a lack of guidelines on how to introduce teacher leadership into schools gives rise to “confusion and misunderstanding among educators about the role of the school management team in developing teacher leadership and how level one educators can lead beyond the classroom” (Singh, 2007). This provided the impetus for our research which was to find out, on a broad scale, firstly, what South African teachers understand by the concept ‘teacher leader’ and, secondly, how teacher leadership is happening in schools and the type of context which supports the emergence of teacher leadership. Teacher leadership research is well established in the USA and Canada and, in the last decade, it has become a focus of research activity in the UK. However, in South Africa, teacher leadership is relatively unknown as an area of research although, particularly at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, it is slowly emerging as an area of research interest (see Grant, 2005; Grant, 2006; Rajagopaul, 2007; Singh, 2007; Khumalo, 2008; Ntuzela, 2008, Grant, forthcoming).

This paper presents the overall findings of a research project carried out by a group of post-graduate Honours students in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2008. The project replicated a quantitative study using a survey approach to examine perceptions about teacher leadership (see Khumalo, 2008). This paper is based on the findings of the survey done which involved 1055 level one teachers in KwaZulu-Natal into their perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership. The choice to do survey research was intentional as we wanted to reach a large number of teachers to get their views. In doing this, we aimed also to compare the findings of our research with the original survey as well as with the more qualitative case study research already completed on the topic. We were interested to know whether our quantitative research methods would complement the findings of the completed qualitative studies or would offer a different perspective altogether.

## **TEACHER LEADERSHIP WITHIN A DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK**

For us, within the concept of teacher leadership lies the potential for change and therefore for school improvement. In her book, *The good high school*, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, maintains that the literature tends to agree that “an essential ingredient of good schools is strong, consistent and inspired leadership” (1983, p.323). Here leadership is understood as the process which brings about change in the organisation and which “mobilizes members to think, believe, and behave in a manner that satisfies emerging organisational needs, not simply their individual needs or wants or the status quo” (Donaldson, 2006, p.7). In other words, Donaldson continues, “leadership helps the school adapt to its changing function in society” (ibid, p.8), while management ensures the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Leadership, however, need not be located only in the principal of a school but should be “stretched over multiple leaders” (Spillane, 2006, p.15). This distributed leadership perspective foregrounds leadership practice which is “constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers and their situations” (ibid, p.26) and can be described as “an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise” (Gronn, 2000, p. 324). It is based on trust (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Blasé and Blasé, 2001; Grant, 2006) and requires ‘letting go’ by senior staff rather than just delegating tasks. As Barth explains: “the most important item on a list of characteristics of effective principals, then, is the capacity to relinquish, so that the latent, creative powers of teachers can be released” (1988, p.640). However, for schools to improve, not only do principals need to distribute authority, but teachers also need to claim and take up their agency role. As Harris and Muijs argue:

Both senior managers and teachers have to function as leaders and decision makers and try to bring about fundamental changes. Essentially, school improvement requires a conceptualization of leadership whereby teachers and managers engage in shared decision-making and risk-taking (2005, p.133).

For teachers to function as leaders, a healthy mix of personal attributes and interpersonal factors are necessary, including “purposefulness” (Donaldson, 2006, p. 181), the courage to take initiative (Grant, 2006), the strength to take risks (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988) and the ability to “work collaboratively with peers” (Harris and Muijs, 2005, p.24). In summary, teacher leaders are:

risk-takers, willing to promote new ideas that might seem difficult or threatening to their colleagues. Their interpersonal skills- they know how to be strong, yet caring and compassionate – helped them legitimate their positions amid hostile and resistant staffs (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988, p. 150).

Teacher leadership can only be understood in relation to the context in which it occurs (Grant, 2006) and, as Smylie argues, “it may be difficult to develop teacher leadership to its full potential without also developing its contexts” (1995, p.6). Research show that teacher leadership requires a school context and culture which is collaborative (Little, 2000) and collegial (Muijs and Harris, 2003) and which allows for ongoing learning, growing and mistake-making. Thus a climate of ongoing support and teacher professional development (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) and a culture of transparency and mutual learning (Grant, 2006) are essential to the development of teacher leadership.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The main aim of our study was to explore how teacher leadership was understood and experienced by teachers in three school districts in KwaZulu-Natal. The following questions guided the research:

- i. What are teachers’ perceptions about leadership in schools?
- ii. To what extent is teacher leadership happening in schools and what roles do teachers take up?
- iii. What are the teachers’ perceptions of the leadership context and culture in their schools?

A survey approach was adopted and a closed questionnaire was developed to gather data. The questionnaires were piloted with a group of 12 educators who were not our research participants and the questionnaire was adapted using the feedback we received. A total of 1055 questionnaires were completed and received from primary (54%), secondary (39%) and combined schools (7%) in three districts in KwaZulu–Natal. Of the sample, 70% of the respondents were from the Umgungundlovu District, 24% from the Umzinyathi District while 6% were from the Umkhanyakude District. There was a good cross-section of both urban and rural schools in the sample. Schools were selected because of their convenience to the researchers and purposive sampling was used in the selection of participants as we only wanted post-level one teachers in our sample. While the research was designed as a quantitative study using the questionnaire method with closed questions, the study fell within the interpretative paradigm. The data were entered using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and thereafter cleansed. It was then analysed using a model of teacher leadership which depicts teacher leadership in relation to zones and roles (see Figure 1 below).

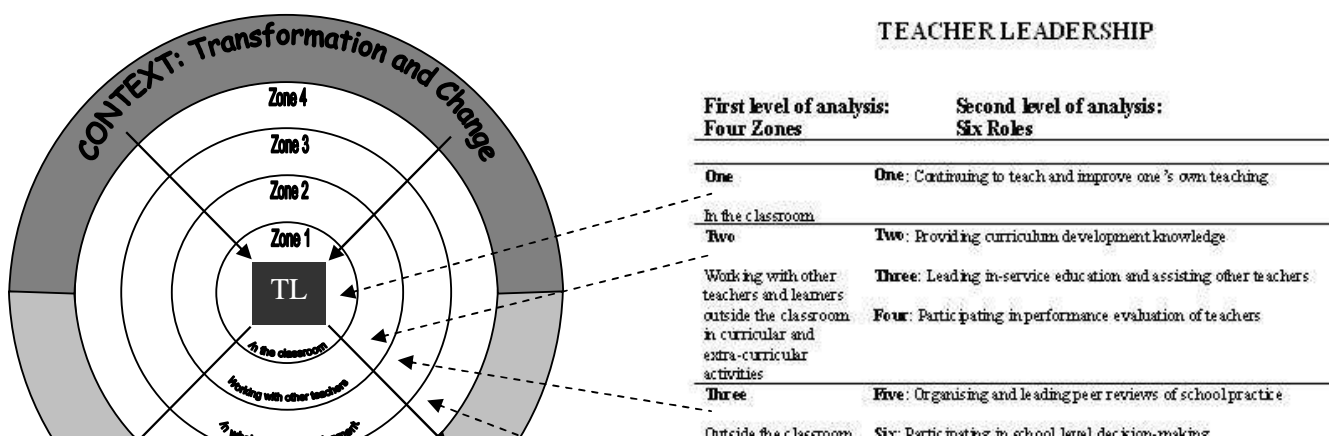


Figure 1: Model of teacher leadership (Grant, forthcoming)

The participants in the study were post level one teachers from 81 schools. The following tables depict the biographical details of the participant group as well as giving some detail about the schools:

**Gender of the respondent**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Female	801	75.9	75.9	76.8
Male	245	23.2	23.2	100.0
Total	1,055	100.0	100.0	

**Age**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
18-30	164	15.5	15.7	15.7
31-40	434	41.1	41.6	57.3
41-50	311	29.5	29.8	87.2
51+	134	12.7	12.8	100.0
Total	1,043	98.9	100.0	
Missing				
System	12	1.1		
Total	1,055	100.0		

**Qualification**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Below M+3	99	9.4	9.4	12.1
M+3	247	23.4	23.4	35.5
M+4	521	49.4	49.4	84.9
M+5 and above	159	15.1	15.1	100.0
Total	1,055	100.0	100.0	

**Nature of Employment**

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	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	14	1.3	1.3	1.3
Permanent	876	83.0	83.0	84.4
Temporary	162	15.4	15.4	99.7
Seconded	3	0.3	0.3	100.0
Total	1,055	100.0	100.0	

#### Years of Teaching Experience

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	219	20.8	21.1	21.1
0-5 years	250	23.7	24.1	45.2
6-10 years	186	17.6	17.9	63.2
11-15 years	382	36.2	36.8	100.0
16+ years	1,037	98.3	100.0	
Missing	18	1.7		
System				
Total	1,055	100.0		

#### Learner Enrolment

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	26	2.5	2.5	2.5
1-299	268	25.4	25.4	27.9
300-599	761	72.1	72.1	100.0
600+	1,055	100.0	100.0	
Total				

#### No. of Educators

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5	0.5	0.5	0.5
2-10	157	14.9	14.9	15.4
11-19	428	40.6	40.6	55.9
20-28	294	27.9	27.9	83.8
29-37	171	16.2	16.2	100.0
38+	1,055	100.0	100.0	
Total				

#### School Type

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Primary	571	54.1	54.1	54.2
Secondary	408	38.7	38.7	92.9
Combined	75	7.1	7.1	100.0
Total	1,055	100.0	100.0	

#### District

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	734	69.6	69.6	69.6
Umgungundlovu	260	24.6	24.6	94.2
Umzinyati	61	5.8	5.8	100.0
Umkhanyakude				

Total	1,055	100.0	100.0
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Annual School Fees					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Fees	186	17.6	17.6	17.6
	R1-R500	391	37.1	37.1	54.7
	R501-R1000	209	19.8	19.8	74.5
	R1001-R5000	100	9.5	9.5	84.0
	R5001+	169	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	1,055	100.0	100.0	

Figure 2

An examination of the annual fees levied indicated a good spread of schools sampled, from no-fee schools to highly resourced schools. This spread gives a good indication of teachers' perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership across different cultures and contexts.

The majority of respondents (76%) were women while 83 % were permanent teachers with no less than 54 % of respondents teaching for more than 10 years. The majority of respondents were seasoned teachers who were sufficiently capacitated to evaluate their school context and culture in order to assess the level of opportunity afforded them to take up their leadership role.

#### TEACHER VIEWS ABOUT SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The majority of the teachers in our study (75%) did not agree with the view that only people in positions of authority should lead. Of the sample, 72% of the teachers believed that school teachers were confident and capable of leading. From the responses, it emerged that only 8% of the teachers were of the opinion that it was only the School Management Team (SMT) who should make decisions in the school. This perception reinforces the view of the Task Team on Education Management Development (Department of Education 1996, p.27) which states that "Management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organizations engage". At a level of rhetoric then, teachers in our study supported the notion of distributed leadership and teacher leadership. However, there was no significant link between the three school districts and teachers' beliefs that leadership and decision making should be shared. There was also not much diversity in the answers when taking into account the age of teachers for this question.

With regard to qualifications and teachers' perceptions about their ability to lead, 62% of teachers who were under-qualified (i.e. with a qualification below M+3) felt they could take a leadership role in the school compared to 77% of teachers who had a minimum qualification (M+4). Of the teachers who were further qualified (with M+5 and above), 72% felt strongly about their ability to lead. We can conclude then that teachers with a higher qualification showed significantly more confidence in taking on leadership roles than those with a lower qualification. The above data suggested that teachers perceived themselves to have the ability to lead and that leadership did not belong only to those in official positions of power. Interestingly though, 58% of the teachers in our study said they resisted leadership from other teachers supporting the research of Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) that egalitarian values among teachers may militate against teacher leadership. This is because, as Troen and Boles suggest, "seeing some teachers do something new and different and get attention and respect, intensifies feelings of turf protection and powerlessness in other teachers" (1994, p.41). Furthermore, it was evident from our study that the majority of men and women teachers believed that the ability to lead was not dependent on gender, as 70% were of the opinion that never or seldom were men better able to lead than women. This pointed to a confidence to lead and be led by both men and women. This was a shift away from the traditional, male-dominated perception that has been prevalent in schools in this country for decades.

In contrast though, there was a significant difference in teachers' perceptions when the school type was analysed in relation to teachers' beliefs that leadership and decision making should be shared. Only 51% of secondary school teachers, 60% of primary school teachers and 70% of combined school teachers felt that only the management team should make decisions sometimes, often or always in the school. Given the limitations of survey research, it would be interesting to interview staff at the combined schools in the study to question them further about their perceptions. Grant states clearly that in order for the transformation of South African schools to take place, principals need to "distribute leadership informally in their organizations" (2005, p. 46).

## THE EXTENT OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS

Research literature indicates that teacher leadership has been shown to be a centrally important feature in classroom and school improvement (Muijs and Harris, 2003). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) argue that it is crucial to ascertain whether teachers are taking the initiative in efforts to bring about school improvement or whether they are carrying out the directives of others. In other words, we need to determine *how* the teacher leadership happens. Is it emergent or is it delegated by a principal or a central office? If teacher leadership is delegated then, as Troen and Boles argue, it is "limited in scope and vision and is subject to cancellation" (1994, p.40).

In our study, 61 % of the teachers indicated that they **often or always** took the initiative without duties being formally assigned to them. Further scrutiny of the above finding revealed that 64% of the teachers in the Umgungundlovu District, 57% in the Umzinyati District and only 46% in the Umkhanyakude District **often or always** took the initiative of their own accord. The issue of context is perhaps pertinent here in understanding this variation. In the Umkhanyakude District, 84% of the teachers in our study taught at no-fee schools that serviced extremely poor communities, compared to 7% of no-fee schools in Umgungundlovu and 31% in the Umzinyathe district. This statistic raised the following question which requires further research: How does the socio-economic status of a community impact on teacher initiative?

The roles related to teacher leadership abound in the literature and include, for example, expert teacher (Harris and Lambert, 2003), reflective practitioner (Day and Harris, 2002), mentor (Anderson and Lucasse Shannon, 1988; Gehrke, 1988), coach (Joyce and Showers, 1982), professional developer (Zimpher, 1988), action researcher (Ash and Persall, 2000) and decision-maker (Griffin, 1995, Muijs and Harris, 2003). In the context of our study, the roles that teachers were involved in and the places in which they led were analysed using zones and roles model of teacher leadership discussed earlier in this paper. We move on now to an overview of the findings.

### Zone 1: Leading within the classroom

This zone focuses on teacher leadership within the classroom and the continuous attempts by teachers to elevate their standard of teaching. In the survey, 77% of the teachers claimed that they **often or always** critically reflected on their classroom practice. Seventy two percent of the respondents also asserted that they regularly (**often or always**) updated their knowledge on pedagogical developments in their learning area. It was evident from the data presented that teachers were engaged in activities that promoted teaching in their classrooms. Upon further interrogation of the data to ascertain if these findings were congruent with the findings across the three districts, it was discovered that there was a strong correlation. In the Umgungundlovu District, 80% of the teachers indicated that they critically reflected on their teaching. The data from the Umzinyati and Umkhanyakude Districts revealed that 70% and 66% of the teachers respectively engaged in critical reflection on their teaching. The data also revealed that 73% of the teachers in the Umgungundlovu District, 66% of the teachers in the Umzinyati District and 75% of the teachers in the Umkhanyakude District claimed that they kept abreast with teaching developments in their learning areas.

However, the data from teachers in the rural district of Umkhanyakude seemed contradictory. While teachers appeared to be the most well informed with regard to developments in their own teaching practices and within their learning areas, they appeared to engage in the least amount of critical reflection about their teaching. We wondered of the possibility of this actually happening and it raised questions about the trustworthiness of our

data. Perceptions of people are just that, perceptions which may differ greatly from actually practice. This pointed to a limitation of our data and highlights the need for further observation and evidence-based research into teacher leadership in schools.

**Zone 2: Working with other teachers and learners outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities**

In this zone the teacher leader is likely to be involved in the provision of curriculum knowledge, managing in-service training and providing assistance to other educators and finally, participating in the performance evaluation of other educators. A mere 19% of the educators in this study claimed to **often or always** provide in-service training (role 3) to their colleagues whilst 30% of the teachers claim to **sometimes** provide in-service training to assist other educators. The data also revealed that 32% of educators **often or always** led outside the classroom by providing curriculum development knowledge to their colleagues (role 2). Despite performance evaluation of peers being an integral aspect of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in which all South African schools are compelled to engage, only 38% of educators **often or always** participated in the performance evaluation of their colleagues (role 4). The two areas in which teachers were most actively engaged were related to role 2 and involved the planning of extra-mural activities in their schools (48% **often or always**) and in the selection of textbooks and instructional materials for their grade or learning area (72% **often or always**). These findings pointed to a restricted form of teacher leadership within this zone and emphasised maintenance and administrative processes, at the expense of leadership processes which works towards movement and change in an organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Opportunities for authentic leadership and teacher empowerment through team work, peer support and collaboration in relation to curriculum issues were the exception rather than the norm. This, Harris and Lambert argue, is crucial to an understanding of teacher leadership because “collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership, as it is premised on change that is undertaken collectively” (2003, p. 44).

**Zone 3: Leading outside the classroom in whole school development**

This third zone comprises two roles of a teacher leader, the one involving teacher participation in school level decision making while the other well involves the teacher in organising and leading reviews of school practice. For Muijs and Harris (2003) involvement in decision-making is a key indicator of the strength of teacher leadership. In our study, the data revealed that teachers were seldom fully involved in decision making. The role which enjoyed the highest level of involvement by teachers within the zone of the whole school related to the setting of standards for pupil behaviour in the school (role 6). The data revealed that 67% of the teachers participated in setting standards for pupil behaviour in their schools. However, only 27% of educators **often or always** organized and led reviews of the school year plan whilst a mere 14% of educators **often or always** set the duty roster for their colleagues. In other words, teachers in our study were not always fully involved in school-wide decision-making processes and when teachers were involved, this usually took the form described by Harris and Muijs (2005, p. 90) of “individual or collective consultation with the senior management team”. Another finding which demonstrated that teachers were not adequately empowered as leaders was their failure to engage in designing staff development programmes. This study revealed that a massive 66% of even the most seasoned teachers (51+ age group), **seldom or never** participated in designing staff development programmes for their school. This finding is illustrated in *Figure 3* below. Only 12% of all the respondents were **often or always** involved in this role. According to Harris and Muijs (2005, p.126) one of the key problems in developing teacher leadership is that “staff lack confidence and in some cases leadership skills to perform the roles and responsibilities”. In cases like these where “teachers are expected to move into leadership roles, they must be provided with meaningful professional development experiences, in both formal and informal settings” (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001, p.53).

	<b>27. I design staff development programmes for my school.</b>					<b>Total</b>
	<b>Never</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Never</b>



Age	18-30	(50%) 82	(20%) 32	33	12	4	1	164
	31-40	(41%) 180	(24%) 104	94	33	19	4	434
	41-50	(30%) 94	(27%) 85	86	27	13	6	311
	51+	(43%) 57	(23%) 31	28	(8%) 11	(3%) 4	3	134
<b>Total</b>		(40%) 413	(24%) 252	241	(8%) 83	(4%) 40	14	1043

Figure 3: Age \* 27. I design staff development programmes for my school. Crosstabulation

#### Zone 4: Leading between neighbouring schools in the community

Roles in this zone are associated with, firstly, providing curriculum development knowledge across schools and, secondly, leading in-service education and assisting other teachers across schools. Only 16% of the teachers in our study **often or always** provided curriculum development knowledge to teachers in other schools (role 2). The data also revealed that 25% of the teachers coordinated aspects of extra-mural activities beyond their school (role 2). Of the teachers, 23% coordinated cluster meetings for their learning areas within their districts. This further demonstrated their involvement in providing curriculum development knowledge to teachers in other schools (role 2). We can conclude, on the basis of these statistics, that teacher leadership within Zone 4 was not a common practice for teachers in our study. This finding concurs with the case study research of Rajagopaul (2007) and the survey research of Khumalo (2008) that teacher leadership was not especially evident in Zone 4.

In summary, it is evident from the data presented above that glimpses of teacher leadership were apparent across all four zones but the degree of teacher leadership varied dramatically from zone to zone. Irrespective of age, gender and qualification, the majority of teachers in our study saw themselves as people who took initiative without being delegated responsibilities. In relation to Zone 1, the majority of teachers believed that they critically reflected on their teaching with the purpose of continuously improving their classroom practice. To a lesser degree, teachers operated as leaders in Zone 2. Teachers were involved in curricular activities in this zone (for example in the selection of materials and text books for their grade or learning area) as well as extra-curricular activities (such as sport). However, the majority of teachers did not provide curriculum development knowledge to their colleagues nor did they lead in-service education and neither did they participate in peer performance evaluation. Teachers defined themselves as leaders within Zone 3 primarily in relation to their participation in school level decision making on the issue of learner discipline. There was little further evidence of teacher leadership in relation to other school decision-making contexts and teachers did not seem to be involved in reviews of school practice. Furthermore, there was little teacher leadership evident in Zone 4 beyond some involvement in learning area cluster meetings and involvement in extra-mural activities. We turn now to school committees to further explore the leadership role of teachers.

#### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT AND CULTURE AS A BARRIER TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP

According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) the context of a school is a vital component that either facilitates or hinders teacher leadership. In support of this position, Harris and Muijs recognise that “school culture and structure are key elements in allowing teacher leadership to flourish” (2005, p.127). In line with this view, our survey aimed to reveal teachers’ perceptions of the context and culture of their schools in order to determine whether schools were well-placed to support teacher leadership or not.

In an attempt to do this, one section of our survey focused on teacher leadership in relation to school committees. We wanted to determine which committees’ teachers were involved in and how they got to be

involved on these committees. By focusing on this aspect of appointment to committees we hoped to uncover how schools were organised and *how* leadership happened. To do this we used Gunter's (2005) classification of distributed leadership, and particularly the authorised and dispersed forms of distributed leadership, to frame our analysis. For Gunter, authorised or delegated distributive leadership involves a hierarchical distribution of tasks to others by the principal (see column in *Figure 4*, headed 'delegated by SMT') while dispersed distributed leadership refers to a process whereby the functioning of an organization mainly occurs in the absence of hierarchical structures and is a more bottom-up process. In line with a more dispersed distributed form of leadership, categories of 'nomination by colleagues' and 'volunteering' were included in our questionnaire.

<b>COMMITTEE INVOLVED IN</b>	<b>NOMINATED BY COLLEAGUES</b>	<b>DELEGATED BY SMT</b>	<b>VOLUNTEERED</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b>CATERING</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>SPORTS</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>546</b>
<b>BEREAVEMENT/CONDOLENCE</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>CULTURAL</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>376</b>
<b>LIBRARY</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>LEARNING AREA</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>561</b>
<b>AWARDS</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>TIME-TABLE</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>08%</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT TEAM</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>MAINTENANCE</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>SAFETY AND SECURITY</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>DISCIPLINE</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>TEACHER UNION</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>02%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>485</b>

*Figure 4: How teachers got involved in committees*

Majority of the educators on the committees listed in our questionnaire were either nominated by colleagues or they volunteered, indicating a more dispersed form of distributed leadership. Some of the committees such as the learning area committee, the timetable committee, the awards committee and the maintenance committee had a relatively high percentage of teachers who were delegated the responsibility by the SMT, indicating an authorised form of distributive leadership. On the basis of this data, one might want to conclude that schools operated democratically allowing for teachers to emerge as leaders. However, other data painted a very different picture of the context and culture of schools.

This other data pointed strongly to the view that school SMTs were an impediment to teacher leadership as they did not distribute leadership but instead autocratically controlled the leadership process. Only 29% of teachers indicated that the school management always has trust in their ability to lead. The majority of teachers, while acknowledging varying degrees of trust exhibited by the SMT, felt that they were not fully acknowledged as leaders. To strengthen this view a mere 27% of respondents believed that the SMT actually valued their opinion. This perceived lack of confidence exhibited by the SMT in teachers' leadership potential acted as a barrier to

teacher leadership. Other barriers that emerged included the lack of teacher professional development as only 32 % of teachers felt that adequate opportunity was created for staff development. Collegiality was not seen as a major stumbling block to teacher leadership as 58% of respondents indicated that teamwork was always encouraged and only a mere 1.6% indicated that they had never experienced teamwork. However, we believe that this question requires further exploration to examine the degree of teacher leadership within the team and the location of the team in relation specifically to the four zones. For the most part then, teacher leadership in our study was understood within a delegated leadership framework as opposed to a distributed one. This concurs with case study research of Singh (2008) who also found that the SMT members were a barrier to leadership through their control of the decision-making process. Similarly, Rajagopal's case study research (2007) highlights principals as a barrier to teacher leadership because they were afraid to delegate authority. In one of Ntuzela's case study schools (2008), under the guise of teacher leadership, principals delegated unwanted tasks and administrative work (as opposed to distributing leadership) to teachers. Similarly, Singh's (2008) principals believed they were developing teacher leadership when instead this was perceived by teachers as management overloading them with unwanted maintenance and administrative chores. In reporting on Singh's study, Grant and Singh explain how "members of SMT's used formal positions to delegate management and administrative tasks to people they saw fit for the role, thereby restricting access to teachers based on their seniority, experience and expertise" (2008, p.14). We concur, therefore, with the South African research on teacher leadership to date that the SMTs, working from a traditional view of leadership, are one of the main barriers to authentic teacher leadership emerging in KZN schools.

However, the SMT members were not perceived as the only barrier to teacher leadership. A further barrier to teacher leadership was teachers themselves, as our study found. Only 19% of teachers in our survey indicated no resistance to teacher leadership from peers. This finding is in keeping with the case study research of Ntuzela (2008) that teachers themselves block teacher leadership, either by refusing to lead, by resisting leadership from other teachers or through a lack of understanding and a lack of training of what teacher leadership is about. A culture of teacher support and collegiality is critical to teacher leadership and, as Grant and Singh maintain, "if the culture of the school is not collegial, barrier to teacher leadership may arise" (2008, p.29).

## **CONCLUSION**

Teacher leadership was generally supported across the schools in our study as a concept, but the extent to which it operated in practice was limited. At the level of practice it seemed that, for the majority of teachers, leadership remained illusive and out of bounds. Where teacher leadership happened it was restricted to the level of the classroom (Zone 1) or, to a lesser degree, to teachers working together on curricular and extra-curricular activities (Zone 2). There was very little evidence of teacher leadership in Zone 3, the level of school-wide decision-making, or in Zone 4 where teachers lead across schools or within the community. Where there was evidence of more participation in zones 3 and 4, the nature of the task was mainly administrative and fairly repetitive. This points to what Harris and Muijs (2005) term restricted teacher leadership which is found in schools where "the cultural and structural changes required to support teacher leadership have not been put in place" (2005, p.116). Given South Africa's history of inequality based on patriarchal power relations within a hierarchical social structure of class and race, it follows that the majority of schools are likely to be grappling with what it means to lead schools democratically. Despite well intentioned national policies, acts and reports, the goals of democracy, equity and redress have remained largely at the level of rhetoric and ignored the "realities on the ground" (Sayed, 2004, p. 252). Although formal management and governance structures, through legislation, exist in schools, it seems that many schools remain unable to change their culture and practices towards more inclusive and democratic forms of participation. This may be because schools are, historically, organisations which are conservative and which attempt to maintain the status quo (Smylie, 1995) and because "teaching is not a profession that values or encourages leadership within its ranks" (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 40), whether it be leadership from teachers or leadership from those in formal positions of authority.

However, we argue that South African schools require just that, leadership, leadership that will challenge the existing status quo and initiate the journey towards school improvement. Our schools need leaders who are courageous, unafraid to take risks and who can use their initiative and work collaboratively with people in

achieving the shared school vision. And, we argue, the role of teachers in this leadership process is crucial. This sleeping giant of teacher leadership must be awakened (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001) and tapped as a powerful source of leadership for school improvement. And, in releasing this potential, teacher leadership will provide “a means for altering the hierarchical nature of schools” (Troen and Boles, 1994, p. 40)

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