Analysis of Iranian EFL Teachers' Leadership in English Language Institutes

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Abstract—**Researchers have demonstrated that effective teacher leadership has a positive influence on English language students' achievement and it is seen as an essential means for institution improvement and renewal. To this end, the present article aimed at exploring and quantitatively analyzing the extent to which EFL teachers perceive teacher leadership. Therefore, through the adoption of a Questionnaire of Teacher Leadership School Survey (presented in appendix B) developed by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), a questionnaire survey was carried out to collect data from 60 EFL teachers across four English language institutes in Alborz province in Iran. Then, as a result of the data analysis, it was indicated that most of the EFL participant teachers practiced and implemented at last an average level of teacher leadership in their classes.**

Index Terms—**EFL teacher leadership, institution improvement, English language students' achievement**

I. INTRODUCTION

The involvement of teachers in the leadership of the school has been given many names. Participatory, shared, collaborative, and distributed have all been used to describe a style of school governance that includes teachers in the decision making process. As the need to improve the effectiveness of schools increases, it becomes certain that one person cannot meet all of the leadership demands. The call for higher levels of student achievement alone requires that leadership be extended to persons other than the administrators (Hook, 2006).

Many studies have documented the influence that effective school leadership has on both the achievement of students and the effectiveness of schools (Muijs and Harris, 2006; Salazar, 2010; DeHart, 2011). Teacher leadership suggests that EFL teachers rightly and importantly hold a central position in the ways English language institutes operate and in the core functions of English language teaching and learning. Building the capacity for English language institute improvement needs careful attention to how collaborative processes in the institutes are fostered and developed. Particularly, concerning with maximizing EFL teacher professional learning, It suggests a view of the institute as a professional community where EFL teachers have the opportunity to learn from each other and to work together (Muijs and Harris, 2006).

Within the literature the concept of 'EFL teacher leadership' is defined in various ways. Muijs and Harris (2006) interpreted it as comprising of the formal leadership roles that EFL teachers undertake that have both management and pedagogical responsibilities. Salazar (2010) `conceptualized teacher leadership as a set of behaviors and practices that are undertaken collectively. It is centrally concerned with the relationships and connections among the individuals within an institute.

In this regard, Cindy Harrison and Joellen Killion (2007) postulated ten roles for teacher leaders which are used in multiple, sometimes overlapping ways. They believe that teacher leaders assume a wide range of roles to support school and student success. The roles are attached in Appendix A.

Over the past 30 years, teacher leadership has gone through a process of three wave evolution (DeHart, 2011). During the first wave in the early 1980s, teacher leadership focused on formal roles such as department head or grade level chair. They function as managers who work to further the efficiency of institute operations.

During the second wave of reform beginning in the mid-1980s, teacher leadership emphasized more on the instructional expertise of teachers. Principals or district leaders appointed teachers as curriculum leaders, staff developers, and mentors for new teachers.

The third wave of teacher leadership began in the late 1980s. Teachers in these leadership roles share best practices with their colleagues, engage in administrative and organizational responsibilities along with the principal, participate in institute wide decision-making.

Formal and informal leadership can be distinguished. Informal leadership relates to classroom related functions such as planning, communicating goals, regulating activities, creating a pleasant workplace environment, supervising, motivating those supervised and evaluating the performance of those supervised (Berliner, 1983). Wasley (1991) mentions that informal leadership practice can also include sharing expertise, volunteering for new projects, and bringing new ideas to the school. In contrast, formal leadership is used by those in positions such as lead teacher, master teacher, department head, union representative, or member of the school's governance council. In a perfect school, all teachers assume varying levels of leadership. In the world of education, effective school administrators do not rely on volunteerism and invite teachers to accept both formal and informal roles (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

In light of these studies, it is expected to observe a close relationship between EFL teacher leadership in educational settings and EFL student and English language institute improvement. Thus, there is a real need for study and analysis of the current status of EFL teacher leadership and its impact on the English language student's achievements in English language institute classrooms.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on teacher leadership has identified positive influences on teacher leaders, their colleagues, the school organization, and the students (DeHart, 2011). Ryan (1999) found that teacher leaders could have a positive effect on students because they influenced the instructional practices of colleagues and were involved in school-level decision making.

Barth (2001) suggests that the students, school, teachers, and the principal all benefit when teacher leadership is in place. Students benefit when teachers are fully informed and work to make reforms and improvements take hold. The school benefits as effectiveness increases as teachers feel like they are a part of the decision making process on campus.

Hook (2006) in a qualitative study used naturalistic inquiry methodology to study the impact that teacher leadership has on school effectiveness. Two suburban high schools were chosen for this study. Interviews, observations, and surveys were used to obtain data. Through these, seven categories emerged that were used to create a written description of teacher leadership on the campuses. Teacher leadership in the past, teacher leadership roles, teacher leadership enablers, teacher leadership restraints, products of teacher leadership, teacher leadership in the present, and the role of the principal emerged when the data were analyzed. The findings indicated that when teacher leadership played a role on these campuses there was an expectation by school administrators that teachers would be leaders. Principals on both campuses had a vision of student success. Communication between school administrators and teacher leaders was strong. Overall, the role of the principal had a powerful impact on teacher leadership and consequently school effectiveness. Teacher leadership being fostered and supported was in large part due to the efforts of the principal.

Using data gathered in Flemish school effectiveness research in technical secondary education, Maeyer, Rymenans, Petegem, Bergh, and Rijlaarsdam (2007) examined whether and how integrated leadership influences two measures of pupil achievement: functional mathematics achievement and reading proficiency. This relationship was tested by means of four conceptual models: (1) the direct effect model, (2) the indirect effect model, (3) the direct and indirect effect model, and (4) the antecedents model. Their research findings show that the antecedent model fits best with the data.

Aliakbari and Sadeghi (2011) examined teacher leadership practice in a sample of Iranian schools. The major intent was to examine the teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership practice in schools and the ways through which such perceptions might be influenced by variables including gender, age, teachers' educational degree, teaching experience, and the level they teach at. Descriptive statistics, t-test, and one way ANOVA were employed to analyze the collected data. The findings revealed that teacher leadership is *often* practiced in the sample schools. Further, data analysis indicated significant difference in teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership practice with reference to their educational degree and the level they teach at. However, no significant differences were found between teachers' perceptions in terms of their age, gender, and teaching experience.

Keow Ngang (2012) identified effective teacher leadership style in managing classroom which included managing classroom environment, He conducted a cultural comparative study between China and Malaysia, and it employed the quantitative method to collect data from the participating schools. The study assessed the perception and the implementation of teacher leadership practice of special education teachers in creating energy in the classroom; building capacity; securing environment; extending the vision; meeting and minimizing crisis; and seeking and charting improvement dimensions. Data were analyzed and the results reveal that the special education teachers practice all the six dimensions of teacher leadership at high level in both countries.

The role of the principal must be taken into account. Harris and Drake (1997) suggested that in order to create a school culture that will sustain teacher leadership, administrators must clearly define goals and allow time for the staff to make sense of problems. Allowing time for the culture or climate of a school to change is an important step to increas teacher leadership. These researchers also suggest that a culture must be created in which control is not found in the principal, but rather the principal supports teachers and creates opportunities for them to develop and grow. Barth(2004) suggests that the principal can create or stop almost everything that takes place on a school campus. This would include teacher leadership on any given campus. Conley (1991) states the first dimension of participation in teacher leadership is principals delegating specific decisions to teachers.

While teacher leadership has many positive effects, many barriers exist to the establishment of its roles. Wynne (2001) suggests that too little time, rigid school schedules, unrelated instructional tasks, lack of support from peers and administrators, and an overemphasis on standardized test scores. Time is mentioned often as a barrier to teacher leadership. Wynne (2001), Ryan (1999), Le Blanc and Sheldon (1997), and Blegen and Kennedy (2000) all suggest that the lack of time inhibits teacher leadership.

Muijs and Harris (2006) aimed at exploring both the ways in which teacher leadership can influence school and teacher development, and what in-school factors can help or hinder the development of teacher leadership in schools. The study was undertaken using a qualitative case study approach, purposively selected as being sites where teacher leadership was operational.

Data indicated that teacher leadership was characterized by a variety of formal and informal groupings, often facilitated by involvement in external programs. Teacher leadership was seen to empower teachers, and contributed to school improvement through this empowerment and the spreading of good practice and initiatives generated by teachers.

While teacher leadership has many positive effects, many barriers exist to the establishment of its roles. Muijsand Harris (2006) found three main categories of barriers. The first one is the external educational context. External accountability mechanisms, especially in low performing schools, put a strong burden on teachers and on senior management that makes the distribution of leadership more difficult and more risky. The second barrier relates the lack of time for teachers to engage in activities outside of classroom teaching and administration appears to be a key inhibitor to teacher leadership, as it is to other educational initiatives. Finally, the role of senior managers in some cases can be seen as a barrier particularly where not all senior managers are willing to relinquish control, where leadership from the head is seen as weak, or where senior managers are poor communicators.

In another attempt to find the barriers, Reeves (2008) considered blame, bureaucracy, and baloney. Blame is efficacy's evil twin. When we blame our present or prospective failure on conditions we cannot influence, then we forfeit efficacy and replace it with the status of a victim. Schools are hierarchical organizations, with organizational charts and clear lines of authority—or so we have been told. But in the context of considering change barriers, we can explore an alternative to hierarchy: the network. Baloney is the unappetizing combination of ingredients including superstition, prejudice, and deeply held convictions, all unburdened by evidence."

DeHart (2011) mentions three types of barriers: relational barriers which involve the dynamics of the relationships between teacher leaders and both their colleagues and their principals. Personal barriers arise from within the teachers themselves and contribute to the difficulty of successful teacher leadership programs. Other barriers, such as time and space, are structural and require either accommodation or adaptation for teacher leadership to prosper.

In light of the apparently fundamental role of teacher leadership in educational setting further inquiry into the role of teacher leadership in Iran, especially EFL teacher leadership in English language institutes, seems to be called for. Hence this study aimed at quantitatively exploring the EFL teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership practice.

III. METHOD

Situation analysis: The role of EFL teacher leadership on students' English language improvement in English language institutes

Although many scholars have conducted studies on teacher leadership, little research has been carried out so far to address the issue in an Iranian context. However, the changing needs of educational systems from top-down and centralized system can only be met in part by improvement in leadership capacity and practice (Aliakbari and Sadeghi, 2011). In line with these changes, EFL Iranian educational system needs to provide English language students with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in the world that awaits them. Hence, this study intends to quantitatively examine teacher leadership practice from the perspective of the EFL teachers in Iranian English language institutes.

Research Question

To what extent EFL Iranian teachers perceive teacher leadership in English language institutes?

Participants

The participants in the study included 60 EFL teachers of four English language institutes of Alborz province. The participants were selected on the basis of convenience sampling method. According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), a convenience sampling involves including the sample whoever happens to be available at the time. 48 participants were females and 12 were males. Of the 60 EFL teachers who answered the questions, 51 held a Bachelor degree and the remaining nine held a Master degree on English language teaching.

Instrument

"Teacher leadership school survey" (TLSS) developed by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) to measure teachers' perceptions of the levels of teacher leadership was used. Five choices were given for each statement to determine the occurrence of the dimensions in teachers' perspective. The choices included (a) never, (b) rarely, (c) sometimes, (d) often, and (e) always. These seven aspects included (a) developmental focus, (b) recognition, (c) autonomy, (d) collegiality, (e) participation, (f) open communication, and (g) a positive environment. Content Validity of the questionnaire was measured in some previous studies. The result obtained for the reliability of the questionnaire by Cronbach's Alpha was .85.

Data collection and analysis procedure

To manage the investigation, the Teacher Leadership School Survey (TLSS), developed by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), was applied to total of 60 EFL teachers at four English language institutes. The researchers explained the general purpose of the study and asked EFL teachers to complete the questionnaires. English language institutes were studied across seven dimensions of teacher leadership, including developmental focus, recognition, autonomy, collegiality, participation, open communication, and positive environment.

Sixty EFL teachers participated in the study were asked to respond to 49 statements in the questionnaire. Five choices were given for each statement included (a) never, (b) rarely, (c) sometimes, (d) often, and (e) always.

A descriptive analysis was conducted by analyzing the means and frequencies of every survey dimension of teacher leadership. Survey dimensions were ranked from highest to lowest. A high mean score indicated high existence of dimension where as a low mean indicated that the dimension of teacher leadership was not observed at their English language institutes and could be considered as a barrier. To determine which institute scored highest on TLSS Leadership, institutes were ranked. Then, one-sample t-test was conducted to examine whether teacher leadership is practiced at each institute.

IV. RESULTS

TLSS Leadership dimensions for the full sample of 60 EFL teachers from four English language institutes who completed the survey are presented in Table 1. Leadership domain mean scores ranged from 2.63 for Participation (SD = .86) to 3.60 for (SD = .70) Developmental Focus. The total TLSS Leadership across dimensions averaged 3.22 (SD = .66) on a five-point scale. Developmental Focus is followed by Recognition dimension (mean=3.45, SD=.73), the Collegiality dimension (mean= 3.40, SD= .72), Autonomous dimension (mean= 3.25, SD= .72), the Positive Work Environment dimension (mean= 3.17, SD=.81), and the Communication dimension(mean= 3.02, SD= .76). The lowest mean score was on the participation dimension.

TABLE 1.
MEAN SCORES OF DIMENSIONS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Dimensions	Mean	N	SD
Participation	2.63	60	0.86
Communication	3.02	60	0.76
Positive Work Environment	3.17	60	0.81
Autonomous	3.25	60	0.72
Collegiality	3.40	60	0.72
Recognition	3.45	60	0.73
Developmental Focus	3.60	60	0.70
Total	3.22	60	0.66

To answer the research question, as the study investigates teacher leadership practice in four English language institutes (Safir, Gouyesh, Navid, and Kosar English language institutes) we subdivided it into four sections. In fact, the extent of teacherleadership practice was examined separately for each institute. Leadership ranged from 3.49 (SD = .61) forSafir to 2.95 (SD = .65) for Gouyesh (Table 2).Then, one-sample t-test was conducted to examine whether teacher leadership is practiced at each institute. The obtained results are presented in Table 3.As the table displays, the level of significance in three institutes, Navid, Safir, andKosar, is lower than the value $p<0.05$. It indicates that teacher leadership is practiced at these institutes. Thus, in three institutes, according to the obtained significance level and mean value exceeding the moderate level 3, the highest andlowest mean scores that can be acquired for leadership practice are 5 and1respectively, it can be said that the teacher leadership is *sometimes* practiced at these institutes. In Gouyesh language institutes, on the other hand, with the mean score of 2.95 and the level of significance of 0.07 which is higher than $p<0.05$, teacher leadership is not practiced.

TABLE 2.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS SCORES OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP AT ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTES

English language institutes	Mean	N	SD
Kosar	3.30	14	0.50
Gouyesh	2.95	12	0.65
Safir	3.49	16	0.61
Navid	3.04	18	0.72

TABLE 3.
ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP PRACTICE AT ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTES

English language institutes	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Kosar	3.30	13	0.02
Gouyesh	2.95	11	0.07
Safir	3.49	15	0.006
Navid	3.04	17	0.04

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study sought to investigate a sample of EFL Iranian teachers' perceptions of the practice of teacher leadership. To examine the question, quantitative methods were used. The researcher employed the Teacher Leadership School Survey to identify the case study English language institutes. Observing the results for the four institutes in the study, it can be concluded that there are differing degrees of teacher leadership for EFL teachers at each institute. According to the analysis of survey data, Safir English language institute scored highest in overall leadership. In three out of four English language institutes teacher leadership is sometimes practiced and in Gouyesh English language institute teacher leadership is not practiced at all.

Some useful hints may be effective in increasing teacher leadership level at English language institutes. Creating an open and healthy institute climate is critical to the employment of teacher leadership. It is what allows EFL teachers to live effective, professional lives, and creates the potential for English language institutes to enable superior EFL student outcomes (Triska, 2007). There must be support for risk taking too. Everyone must be encouraged to try new things. Meanwhile, seminars should be organized about teacher leadership at regular times. Learning communities that promote autonomy and a willingness to implement best practices for EFL student and teacher learning is necessary for the improvement of struggling institutes (Salazar, 2010).The facilities and opportunities should also be given to EFL teachers to interact with each other for their professional development. The study reveals that there is still some work to be done to improve teacher leadership for improved English language learner-achievement.

Ideally, further research would expand the number of EFL teachers and English language institutes studied to generate findings that might be more generalizable .Additional research is also needed on the relation between gender, age, teachers' educational degree, and EFL teaching experience and teacher leadership.

APPENDIX A. TEN ROLES POSTULATED BY CINDY HARRISON AND JOELLEN KILLION (2007)

1. Resource Provider

Teachers help their colleagues by sharing instructional resources. These might include Web sites, instructional materials, readings, or other resources to use with students. They might also share such professional resources as articles, books, lesson or unit plans, and assessment tools.

2. Instructional Specialist

An instructional specialist helps colleagues implement effective teaching strategies. This help might include ideas for differentiating instruction or planning lessons in partnership with fellow teachers.

3. Curriculum Specialist

Understanding content standards, how various components of the curriculum link together, and how to use the curriculum in planning instruction and assessment is essential to ensuring consistent curriculum implementation throughout a school. Curriculum specialists lead teachers to agree on standards, follow the adopted curriculum, use common pacing charts, and develop shared assessments.

4. Classroom Supporter

Classroom supporters work inside classrooms to help teachers implement new ideas, often by demonstrating a lesson, coteaching, or observing and giving feedback. Blase and Blase (2006) found that consultation with peers enhanced teachers' self-efficacy.

5. Learning Facilitator

Facilitating professional learning opportunities among staff members is another role for teacher leaders. When teachers learn with and from one another, they can focus on what most directly improves student learning. Their professional learning becomes more relevant, focused on teachers' classroom work, and aligned to fill gaps in student learning.

6. Mentor

Mentors serve as role models; acclimate new teachers to a new school; and advise new teachers about instruction, curriculum, procedure, practices, and politics.

7. School Leader

Being a school leader means serving on a committee, such as a school improvement team; acting as a grade-level or department chair; supporting school initiatives; or representing the school on community or district task forces or committees.

8. Data Coach

Teacher leaders can lead conversations that engage their peers in analyzing and using this information to strengthen instruction.

9. Catalyst for Change

Teachers who take on the catalyst role feel secure in their own work and have a strong commitment to continual improvement. They pose questions to generate analysis of student learning.

10. Learner

Among the most important roles teacher leaders assume is that of learner. Learners model continual improvement, demonstrate lifelong learning, and use what they learn to help all students achieve.

APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP SCHOOL SURVEY DEVELOPED BY KATZENMEYER AND MOLLER (2009)

1 At my school, administrators and teachers try hard to help new teachers be successful

2 At my school, teachers are provided with assistance, guidance or coaching if needed.

3 Administrators at my school actively support the professional development of faculty and staff.

4 We gain new knowledge and skill through staff development and professional reading.

5 We share new ideas and strategies we have gained with each other.

6 Teachers at my school are supportive of each other personally and professionally.

7 Teachers at my school are engaged in gaining new knowledge and skills.

8 The administrators at my school have confidence in me.

9 My professional skills and competence are recognized by the administrators at my school.

10 Other teachers recognize my professional skills and competence.

11 It is apparent that many of the teachers at my school can take leadership roles.

12 The ideas and opinions of teachers are valued and respected at my school.

13 At my schools we celebrate each others' successes.

14 Many of the faculty and staff at my school are recognized for their work.

15 In my role as a teacher, I am free to make judgments about what is best for my students.

16 At my school I have the freedom to make choices about the use of time and resources.

17 I know that we will bend the rules if it is necessary to help children learn.

18 Teachers are encouraged to take the initiative to make improvement for students.

19 I have input to developing a vision for my school and its future.

20 At my school teachers can be innovative if they choose to be.

21 Administrators and other teachers support me in making changes in my instructional strategies.

22 Teachers at my school discuss strategies and share materials.

23 Teachers at my school influence one another' teaching.

24 Teachers in my school observe one another' work with students.

25 I talk with other teachers in my school about my teaching and curriculum.

26 Teachers and administrators work together to solve students' academic and behavior problems.

27 Other teachers at my school have helped me find creative ways to deal with challenges I have face in my classes.

28 Conversations among professionals at my school are focused on students.

29 Teachers have input to decisions about school change.

30 Teachers have a say in what and how things are done.

31 Teachers and administrators share decisions about how much time is used and how the school is organized.

32 Teachers and administrators at my school understand and use the consensus process.

33 Teachers participate in screening and selecting new faculty and/or staff at my school.

34 My opinions and ideas are sought by administrators at my school.

35 We try to reach consensus before making important decisions.

36 Because teachers and administrators share ideas about our work, I stay aware of what is happening.

37 At my school everybody talks freely and openly about feelings and opinions they have.

38 Faculty and staff at my school share their feelings and concerns in productive ways.

39 Teachers at my school discuss and help one another solve problems.

40 Faculty and staff talk about ways to better serve our students and their families.

41 When things go wrong at our school, we try not to blame, but talk about ways to do better the next time.

42 Faculty meeting time is used for discussions and problem solving.

43 Teachers are treated as professionals at my school.

44 Teachers at my school look forward to coming to work every day.

45 There is a general satisfaction with the work environment among teachers at my school.

46 Teachers and administrators at my school work in partnership.

47 Teachers at my school are respected by parents, students, and administrators.

48 The principal, faculty, and staff at my school work a team.

49 We feel positive about the ways we are responding to our students' needs.

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