A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL HEADMASTERS IN SUPPORTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND IN CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP ABILITY: HEADMASTER AND TEACHER VIEWS

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ABSTRACT:
This case study was conducted to evaluate and examine the role the middle school headmasters in making and supporting teacher leadership ability to meet and increase the school development process. Successful teacher leadership did not means simply obtaining a position, but rather possessing the knowledge and understanding of successful leadership skills along with the personal ability to effectively implement those skills. Hence, "School leaders need impressive skills to provide leadership in our diverse school environments". The study reviewed the literature on headmaster leadership and teacher leadership, as it was related to study notions like, making and supporting teacher leadership, building leadership capacity, and distributing leadership. The study conducts and reports the series of interviews with five headmasters and fifteen identified teacher leaders of five high performing middle schools of sub -district Dooru Shahabad (J&K) with regard to the headmasters role in making and supporting the teacher leadership, decision making, building leadership ability and school vision. Similarly, teacher leaders were asked about their abilities to serve as leaders, their perceptions about headmaster's role in supporting teacher leadership. Both headmasters and teachers views were analyzed and the findings revealed that the middle school headmasters should create teacher leadership as a culture to reinforce or motivate the teachers to adopt and accept the leadership roles and nourish their leadership skills and ability.

KEY WORDS: Teacher Leadership, School Leaders, Distributing Leadership, Leadership Culture.

INTRODUCTION:
Changing schools and new conceptions of teaching and learning call for a different approach to manage the schools and a different approach to leadership. Schools as learning communities replace the more traditional rigid authoritarian structure (Barth, 1986; Clark, 1990; Du Four, 1998). In essence, the centralized control of schools gives way to a system of empowerment of teachers, parents, and students; shared decision making; and the development of professional learning communities. According to Starratt (1995), "The task of fundamentally reforming the structures of schooling is perhaps the most challenging opportunity that faces school leaders". The specific challenge for today's headmasters is to become "organizational architects" where they replace a traditional focus on stability with a focus on change (Louis & Miles, 1990).

LITERARURE REVIEW:
The concept of teacher leadership revolves round the headmaster for its existence. It is the headmaster, who plays a very important role in supporting teacher leadership. Barth (2001) issues a challenge that follows the well-known educational mantra of the reform era "All students can learn." He suggests "All teachers can lead." He goes on to state "Indeed, if middle schools are going to become places in which all children are learning, all teachers must lead". Several arguments, both empirical and theoretical, support this statement. Headmasters must develop middle school cultures that support the making of teacher leadership ability. This is of critical importance as it acts as an engine that allows for leadership cultivation and distribution.Various researchers have tried to understand teacher leadership in different manner.According to Patterson and Patterson (2004), "Teacher leaders serve as department heads, grade-level leaders, and team leaders, counselors for new teachers, peer coaches, or members of curriculum

development task forces". Danielson (2007) adds "These individuals typically apply for their positions and are chosen through a selection process".Harris and Muijs (2003) define it as "a form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impacts directly upon the quality of teaching and learning". Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) who argues their definition is constantly evolving as they continue their studies submit "Teachers, who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational performance".

It is clear from the existing literature on leadership that the present leadership cannot be carried on by a single person to meet and increase the developmental aims and goals of a school because of the heavy workload on middle school headmasters. Therefore there is a need to distribute the leadership among the teachers and make distributed leadership a culture, where headmasters employ their skills in making or cultivating leadership abilities in teachers. According to Fullan (2001) reculturation is the process whereby teachers question and change their beliefs and practices. As cited in Patterson (2002), Fullan argues that "restructuring a middle school without culturing achieves very little in terms of changing what teachers do in their classrooms or in changing relationships among people in middle schools that are mediated by deeply held cultural assumptions". Additionally, while Hay Group Education has found distributed leadership to be given, not taken, other authors (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) challenge this stipulation, arguing it is taken as much as it is given. Consensus on this issue has yet to be reached.

Spillane (2006) brings clarity to those struggling with the multiple definitions of distributed leadership. A distributed perspective on leadership involves two aspects: the leader-plus aspect and the practice aspect. While the leader-plus aspect is vital, it is insufficient on its own. The leadership practice aspect moves the focus from aggregating the actions of individual leaders to the interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation.

The literature on the changing role of the headmaster indicated that with the increase in demand to produce evidence of student learning, the job of the headmaster has become very, challenging, questionableand unmanageable, because of the least involvement of teachers as leaders. The literature on teacher leadership revealed that teachers can act both formally and informally to increase the school excellence and achievement. Teacher fraternities are well honored for their experience and skills and thus arefit to accept and expand the leadership base in middle schools. However, the current situation and structure of the profession poses challenges when teachers try to expand their influence beyond the walls of their classroom.

Keeping in view the situation and importance of the teacher leadership in middle schools of Kashmir, it is important to examine the leadership qualities of middle school headmasters and teachers. This study therefore intends to fill the gap by examining the views of headmasters and teachers regarding their support and ability in the schools of Dooru Shahabad, where the need of the hour is to distribute the leadership.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the headmaster in promoting the teacher leadership and in making leadership/administrative ability. The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What traits of middle school headmaster and administrative conditions do teacher leaders observe as authorizing or empowering their development of teacher leadership ability?
2. What deliberate judgments do middle school headmasters make to raise the administrative ability in terms of teacher leadership?
3. How do middle school teacher leaders view their ability to serve as instructional leaders manipulating school reform efforts?

METHODOLOGY
This study was designed using the descriptive method based on a case study approach. The data for this study was collected from two sources – headmasters and teacher leaders. It depends on field survey data as well as in-depth, semi-structured personal interviews of fifteen (n=15) middle school teachers viewed as leaders and five (n=5) headmasters of five high performing middle schools of sub-district Dooru Shahabad(J&K). The schools that participated in this study are:

1. Kashmir Public School.
2. Himalayan Bells International School.
3. Shemstar International Public School.
4. Crescent Public School.
5. Iqbal Memorial Institute.

A brief explanation of the procedure used in identifying participants is provided below:

A field survey identified teacher leaders at five high performing middle schools in sub-district Dooru Shahabad (J&K). The teacher leader sample was identified by their peers and headmasters by implementing snowball sampling strategy.Top three teacher leaders of each school identified both by their headmasters and peers were selected as the study participants. The sample were then invited and agreed to participate in personal interviews. The interviews were designed in such a way so that in-depth responses should be gained to decide if there is anything unique about the ways in which individual teachers experience teacher leadership. Five middle school headmasters were also interviewed to gain insight into the headmaster's views on teacher leadership and how they use it to achieve administrative goals. All interviews were audio-taped, recorded and analyzed. This analysis revealed important insights about teacher and headmaster insights regarding teacher leadership. Teacher leader interviewresponses were also used to triangulate responses provided by headmasters. In other words, teacher leader responses were envisioned to confirm whether headmaster's arguments are consistent with their actions or not.

DATA ANALYSIS:

The process of data analysiswas carried on according to themes that emerged fromthe responses of the headmasters and teachers. Then the results were used tosuit as answers for the research questions. The data analysis was a multistep procedure included the following:

1. After concluding each and every interview, the researcher used to listen to the audio-taped recording several times.
2. A transcript of every interview was created and later those transcripts were read several times. A sample of the data collected were shared and discussed with the supervisor in order to strengthen the validity of the theme analysis, which sometimes resulted in the merging of some themes, and ultimately led to a more credible study.

FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEW:

The analyzed data was originally the contributions of 5 headmasters and 15 teacher leaders (total 20) individuals. On the basis of the answers to interview questions, the study reached to a climax to develop profiles of the teacher leaders and of headmasters, so as to highlight their leadership traits.

PROFILE OF A TEACHER LEADER

During data analysis, the researcher reviewed the interviewed records and found the following descriptors which described the characteristics and activities of teacher leaders. Teachers shared their views about their headmasters' leadership ability and their support in making leadershipculture. The researcher during interviews,notice that many of the individuals described as leaders by their peers and headmasters shared similar traits.

➢ Open to trying new things	➢ Take initiative
➢ Students oriented	➢ Innovative
➢ Team spirit	➢ Risk takers & contributive
➢ Hardworking & subject experts	➢ Approachable and open minded
➢ Good & patient listeners	➢ Service oriented
➢ Passionate, honest, visible & humble	➢ Respect colleagues as resources
➢ Eagerness to improve & grow	➢ Strong fellow through skills

Table 1: Teacher Leadership Traits

PROFILE OF A HEADMASTER:

During the interviews, a profile of those headmasters emerged; who supports the development of teacher leadership ability. During the interviews, headmasters shared openly and frankly how they interacted with teachers, how they supported teacher leadership, and generally how they performed the duties of

instructional leadership.A review of the records resulted in several descriptors that could be used to characterize the traits of the headmasters of the participant middle schools.

➢ Careful instructional observer	➢ Most respected & least liked
➢ Visionary, humorous & visible	➢ Guide & facilitator for teachers
➢ Eager to learn & teach	➢ Student oriented & supportive
➢ Investigating nature & serious leader	➢ Resources hub & accountable
➢ Value shared relationships	➢ Allow teachers freedom
➢ Give teachers possession	➢ Accessible & good listener

Table 2: Headmaster Leadership Traits

FINDINGS BY RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
Research Question 1:

What headmaster activities and managerial conditions do teacher leaders observe as authorizing or empowering their development of teacher leadership ability?

According to the findings of the study, one thing was clear that headmasters are essential forces in creating teacher leadership. Teacher leaders speak of manytraits of headmaster and administrative conditions as authorizing or empowering their development of teacher leadership ability. Specifically, they supported the importance of having a headmaster who did not bind them to the four walls of a classroom. They speak in favorof that headmaster, who allows them freedom to be innovative and try new things. Teachers like to be acknowledged for their contributions because this is a sign of confidence. As they feel supported, teachers will subsequently continue to grow and will helpthem with their strengths and provide them with opportunities to shine. Also, headmasters must be accessible to teachers. Teacher leaders appreciate working with headmasters who are willing to provide feedback, so they can continue to improve their instruction.

Culture of continuous developmentemerged as one of the administrative conditions that leaders observe as authorizing or empowering their teacher leadership. Eachstudy participant schools were high performing and there is a strong push to go from "better to best". Teachers are expected to improve continuously and access to professional development opportunities, which is very important, whether it is internal examination, or external seminars on differentiated instruction or workshops etc.

Teamwork is another condition that helps teachers develops their leadership capacity. Teachers enjoy sharing best practices not only within their schools, but throughout the district. According to teachers, clear expectations are also helpful. Not only do they want to know what is expected of them and others, but it is essential that headmasters hold teachers accountable. Teachers view this as a professional responsibility and without it, student learning is inhibited. Finally, it is important to point out that none of this ability making measures can occur without strong relationships – teacher to headmaster and teacher to teacher. Within these relationships respect develops, ideas are shared, feedback is given and professional growth takes root. We know it is important to honor the efforts and praise teacher leaders for their successes, but how do headmasters motivate them to lead in the first place? The findings from this study convey that teachers have differing opinions on what inspires them to take action and lead beyond the walls of their classrooms. The current study clearly indicates that the headmaster's at all the middle schools are presently attempting to establish sustainable cultures of teacher leadership.

Research Question 2:

What deliberate judgments do headmasters make to increase administrative ability in terms of teacher leadership?

The headmasters at the five middle schools that participated in this study use a variety of strategies in an effort to build teacher leadership capacity. The one thing that they all have in common is that they try to examine and encourage the strengths. When they have a need, they consider teacher interest and expertise and see how these align with the task at hand. They also seek to understand what motivates teachers to make contributions beyond their classrooms, and try to use that as an incentive. It is apparent from the study that relationships are at the foundation of building teacher leadership capacity. The data clues to a

surplus of deliberate actions taken by the middle school headmasters in an attempt to develop administrative ability. These efforts results in the rise of three categories:

1. Vision
2. Strong skills

Non-compromised norms

Research Question 3:

How do teacher leaders observe their ability to serve as instructional leaders influencing middle school reform efforts?

All the teachers interviewed indicated there were plenty of opportunities for teachers to lead within their schools. However, teacher perceptions about their leadership varied greatly. Each teacher leader offered a different story, and experienced a different level of success in their role as a leader. A majority of the teacher leaders viewed lack of time and dull salary as an obstacle to their success. While teachers participating in the study reported few restrictions to their service as instructional leaders influencing school reform efforts, they acknowledged many supports. For example, a majority indicated their headmasters were very supportive. Headmasters were accessible, encouraging, provided clear expectations, allowed teachers a voice in the decision-making process, and allowed them the opportunity to take risks and to try new things. If a teacher expressed a need for resources, headmasters found a way to secure those resources. Most of the teacher leaders reported that they felt valued by their headmaster. These headmasters support have enabled teachers to influence change within their, schools and throughout the district.

The study findings discovered that despite being characterized as leaders by their peers, several teachers reported struggling to bring about change and build ability in others. This results in teachers moderating their leadership or walking away from it altogether. Some teachers also reported that "spoken" staff members served to quiet the voices of some of the newer teachers. While the work of teacher leadership is challenging and there are parts of the professional cultural that have historically worsened the problem, especially in the circumstances prevailing in Jammu& Kashmir and these conditions have not stopped many of the teachers in these middle schools from leading. It is important to note that while the sample of the study was limited to 15 teacher leaders, and this sample of teachers were recognized as leaders by their headmasters and peers in at least one of seven areas viz. curriculum, instruction,student involvement, staff development, teaching learning, class management, and diversity. The research suggests headmasters should consider reforming their webs to cover a broader area and continue nourish and spread leadership opportunities to more teachers.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

1. Research shows, however, that the role of the headmaster is changing. The results of the interviews associated with this study confirmed what the existing research suggests – the headmaster plays a vital role in shaping middle school leadership culture. One important implication of this study is the identification of what teachers say their headmasters do to support their growth as teacher leaders. Headmasters who seek to develop strong cultures of teacher leadership must design these types of multi-faceted environments for teacher leadership ability to continue to grow.

2. Teacher leaders are the key players in school reform efforts. It is impossible to address the changing role of the school leader without addressing the rise of teacher leaders as key players in leading local change efforts. As accountability pressures increase, school leaders are realizing the urgent need for quality help to sustain professional development initiatives and to serve as mentors and coaches for teachers. "If schools are to be places in which students and educators are successful in their respective roles, teachers must be at the core of leadership communities". Teacher leaders are being recruited to assume a shared responsibility for achieving essential school improvement goals. They may be asked to contribute to the school improvement planning process a chairpersons, facilitators, or committee leaders with specific content expertise. They often continue serving in traditional roles such as grade-level team leaders, department heads, or athletic directors, but extend themselves to grow professionally. This talent pool of teacher experts has "created a new kind of professional

development that integrates teachers' learning with teachers' practice, gives participants ongoing feedback, and makes these activities a whole-school, collegial endeavor. The need to share or distribute leadership opportunities is another implication of this study. Based on the current study it appears that the headmaster who does this well lays out the vision, clearly states his or her expectations, publicly admits and copies desirable activities, and holds people accountable for moving towards the realization of the vision. When goals are achieved, success is celebrated, at the same time, new targets are established. This is reflection of the better to best philosophy associated with continuously improving schools. But as the existing research suggests, these headmasters would not be as successful without the participation of teacher leaders. All of the headmasters indicated they developed a clear vision in teamwork with their teachers. Collectively they decided suitable goals for their school, focused on achieving them and check their progress regularly.In addition to involving teachers in the visioning process, these headmasters skillfully identified the powers within individual teachers and invited them to take on a variety of roles and responsibilities outside the walls of their classrooms.

3. Another implication of this study is that headmasters pursuing to build teacher leadership ability should first seek to recruit the best people available and build upon their skills and strengths. Headmasters in the middle schools focused on identifying individual skills/strengths within their teachers and then provided them with opportunities to use these skills for the benefit of the entire organization. Incidentally, they acknowledged to applying the same strategy when hiring headmasters. It is not necessary for everyone to be good at everything. According to these headmasters though, it is necessary to have people with strong skills in a variety of areas. They then serve as the models. They set the aims and goals, and in association with their peers seek to achieve them. Even if they fall short, the organization as a whole is much stronger due to the collective growth they have made.

CONCLUSION:

The echoes of the teacher leaders participating in this study suggest that headmaster leadership clearly influences the ways in which they experience their own leadership. In each of these middle schools, headmasters create administrative structures that stand-in, support, and reinforce teacher leadership. They build teacher leadership ability by facilitating teachers with their righteous powers, strengths and providing them ample opportunities to prove their excellence. They should allow teachers to have a say/voice in decision making processes and encourage them to take responsible risks and provide feedback needed to improve future performance. Teamwork and mutuality are the permanents (non-compromised) for these headmasters, who expect teachers to do whatever it takes to ensure student success. These headmasters hold the department vision of all students learning and that ultimately translates into a "better to best" middle school culture in which student learning is honored and valued. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these headmasters model what they value. In other words, they do what they think and talk. They serve as influential positive examples and role models for teachers pursuing to build their leadership ability. In summary, these middle school headmasters successfully pull the strong points/strengths/strong skills of their teachers within the framework of environments that are best characterized as professional learning communities.

While the small sample size of this study excludes generalization, but still it does provide the reader with insights into what teachers and headmasters in middle schools believe builds teacher leadership ability. The results of the study discovered several practical implications that may inform teachers and headmasters seeking to better understand the liveliness of teacher leadership and more specifically, methods for improving leadership ability.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The topic of teacher leadership is so vast that a large number of research studies can be done in its different dimensions. So further research on the concept of teacher leadership will likely confirm many of the results of this study and deepen the education community's understanding of the topic. Studies that examine headmasters' roles in supporting teachers who are empowered/authorized to lead definite change

initiatives would be extremely beneficial. Additional investigation of how headmasters choose the leaders would also be helpful. It is also important to identify the impact serving as a teacher leader (both formally and informally) has on job satisfaction and classroom performance. Similarly, future research needs to examine how to build teacher leadership ability influences a headmaster job satisfaction? How does teacher leadership ability in most successful middle schools compare to that of teachers in schools undergoing major and influential reform efforts.

The additional important recommendations that drew from the study are as:

1. The study suggests that a staff development system is needed that initially prepares new school administrators for the challenges of school leadership and then fosters the development of skills and knowledge throughout their administrative careers.
2. Design and implement a plan to identify and develop a larger and more diverse pool of prospective school leaders.
3. Design and implement professional development that supports the changing role and responsibilities of school leaders.
4. Recognize the core skills and knowledge defined under the middle school administrative standards.
5. Design administrator and teacher assessment and evaluation procedures to identify areas where administrators need continued professional development.
6. Develop compensation program more closely aligned to business leadership role and responsibility required by the job.
7. Clarify and categorize the responsibilities of building administrators and teachers into leadership and management and create a new position in each school to manage the management responsibilities.
8. Upgrade administrative salaries and benefits to make them more attractive to aspiring leaders and competitive with other districts and states, especially adjoining states.
9. Implement professional training and guidance to improve the ability of the building administrator to be an instructional leader.
10.   Develop programs to identify and train aspiring administrators.
11.   Develop comprehensive recruitment programs for the pool of in-state aspiring leaders and practicing administrators from other states.

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