

## The Relationship between Teacher Leadership and Student Performance

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### Abstract

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*Leadership is a fundamental factor required to enhance the instructional quality of teachers. Teacher leaders possess excellent class management skills and are more capable of driving students toward academic success. In the current body of work, limited studies have focused on the impact of teacher leaders on student learning, while having leadership responsibilities inside the classroom. The purpose of this study is to explore in depth the entire concept of teacher leadership in the classroom and its relationship to student performance and achievement. The study involves a synthesis of evidence in education literature that describes the concept of teacher leadership and student performance. The findings reveal that teacher leaders, whether outside or within the classroom, are driven by the desire to improve student learning. Students taught by teacher leaders have a high probability of succeeding academically compared to those under non-leader educators.*

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**Keywords:** teacher leadership, student performance, student achievement, classroom actions

### 1. Introduction

To teach is to lead. Students' success is not determined by the color of their skin or the income of their parents. Students' success depends on the person standing in front of them in their classroom -their teacher. America's future depends on teachers leading in their classrooms. A teacher leader is the most significant factor in determining students' growth. In recent times, researchers have placed considerable attention to the concept of teacher leadership as they attempt to uncover its relationship with student's educational development and achievement. This stems from the realization that although principals and other administrators are considered the formal 'school leaders,' teachers are the primary catalysts for educational change, particularly in the classroom. There is a strong consensus among education stakeholders globally that if all teachers presented themselves more as leaders in their capacity (not necessarily as school administrators), they would have a tremendous impact on academic excellence.

School performance is considered a crucial determinant for further educational opportunities, career development, and economic success both as an individual and collectively as a country. One of the reasons behind the push for teacher leadership is the recurrent trend of negative school performances that have been reported in recent years. According to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report (2016), at least one in four 15-year-old students in 64 OECD countries (including the US) complete their education without attaining the required proficiency level in reading, mathematics, or/and science. This figure translates to about 13 million low performing students lacking the basic skills to sustain their country's economic growth in the future (OECD, 2016). This is indeed a great compromise to national economies. Clearly, there is a need to find lasting solutions to this negative trend of poor academic performance.

Research has shown that teacher leadership is one of the most important school-based factors in determining student achievement. Oqvist and Malmstrom (2016) found the degree of teacher's developmental leadership greatly influences student motivation and performance. According to Oqvist and Malmstrom (2016), a high degree of teacher leadership in the classroom leads to a conducive learning environment that fosters educational motivation and promotes students' performance. On the contrary, a low degree of teacher leadership led to a non-conducive learning environment characterized by demotivated students and nonperformance. Despite the identified benefits of teacher leadership as a solution to poor school performance, teachers' perspective on the concept is still a stumbling block. Most teachers still attach the term leadership to positions of influence or power, such as school administrators (Hamzah et al., 2016). Teachers without positions or formal responsibilities rarely see themselves as leaders. Teachers need to understand the entire concept of teacher leadership and their role in improving students' learning quality.

The purpose of this study is to explore in depth the entire concept of teacher leadership in the classroom and its relationship to student performance and achievement. The study involves a synthesis of evidence in education literature that describes the concept of teacher leadership and student performance. The paper begins by looking at the definition of teacher leadership, emphasizing the relationship between teaching and leading. Secondly, the study analyzes how teachers develop leadership skills. Thirdly, the study will explore the subject of teacher leaders in the classroom. Finally, the article will focus on how teachers can make a difference (improve student performance) by assuming a leading role in the classroom.

Strong teacher leadership is essential for students' growth in the classroom. Teacher leaders believe their primary purpose is to maximize students' development. Students' growth is defined as the amount of academic progress that students make over the course of a grade or class. All students enter a teacher's classroom at various levels of preparedness. Some students might have struggled in their growth in previous grades, while others might have excelled. Over the course of a school year, all students are expected to progress in their growth regardless of the levels they entered at a particular grade or class. Teacher leaders are those teachers who push their students to make progress regardless of what level the student was at when they entered the teacher's classroom. Even though students might not reach proficiency in being prepared to master the next grade's content standards, a teacher leader can help them grow at rates of significance.

The path-goal theory of leadership responds clearly to the question of how teacher leaders influence student motivation and educational performance. According to the theory, effective leaders embrace specific behavior or style that best fits the subordinates and their environment (Oqvist & Malmstrom, 2016). This approach aims to motivate, empower, and satisfy the subordinates to enhance their performance and productivity. The leader selects and engages in specific behaviors, which complements the subordinates' abilities hence driving them to their goals. Generally, the leader begins by determining the environmental and subordinates' characteristics. They then select specific leadership styles and behaviors and focus on motivation factors that help the subordinates reach their goals. Some of the identified leadership styles/behaviors include:

- a) Directive: Informing subordinates on what is expected of them.
- b) Supportive: Showing concern for subordinates by being friendly and approachable.
- c) Participative: Consulting with subordinates in decision making.
- d) Achievement: Setting goals for subordinates and showing confidence in their ability to meet the expectations.
- e) Facilitative: Building teams, shaping leaders, and creating effective working relationships.
- f) Group decision-making: Creating groups that analyze problems together and make collective decisions.
- g) Value-based: Understanding the subordinate's values and using them as motivators and instruments of cohesiveness.

In education, the path-goal theory describes how teacher leaders use their position, as instructors, to motivate students and help them achieve academic targets. According to the theory, the teacher leader uses their flexibility to understand what style or behavior best suits students and help them reach their goal. Motivation means students realize that they have what it takes, including the required competency, to achieve a particular educational goal. The critical challenge is for the teacher, through their leadership skills, to come up with behaviors or styles that complement the students' ability and address their deficiencies. In return, the student becomes satisfied,

motivated, and productive. Ultimately, the teacher leader creates a path through which the students achieve their valued outcomes (high education performance). The current paper considers teachers as having an instrumental role in leading students to high educational performance. This can be achieved if teachers understand their leadership role in the classroom and use their position to select specific behaviors or styles that will motivate students and lead them to high academic performance.

### **1. Teachers are Leaders**

To comprehend the concept of teacher leadership, it is essential to understand the meaning of a teacher and a leader and how the two connect. This section defines a teacher and a leader and later describes the connection between the two terms. This will lead to an in-depth understanding of the concept of teacher leadership. Lastly, a description of how teachers learn to become leaders is given.

#### **1.1 Definition of a Teacher**

The word teacher comes from the verb 'teach,' which means to show, instruct, or impart knowledge. A teacher is a person that imparts knowledge to others. The person receiving the knowledge is a student or learner. Knowledge is any information, instruction, skill, or fact brought to a person's attention. The process of passing information from a teacher to a student is called teaching, educating, training (if it's through practice), or instructing.

Teaching is either formal or informal. Informal teachers include anyone passing knowledge to people. For instance, a mother teaches her children how to cook. Informal teachers include religious leaders, social workers, and elders. Formal knowledge or education is obtained from learning institutions (schools and colleges). Professional teachers conduct formal teaching in learning institutions. Professional teachers are paid for their services and are expected to impart formal education and training to students. A professional teacher passes knowledge such as literacy, numeracy, art, religion, science, vocational training, civics, or life skills. This knowledge is packaged in a curriculum that is systematically taught. Upon completing the curriculum, one is considered qualified to advance to a higher educational level or enter the job market. This article focuses on professional teachers.

#### **1.2 Definition of a Leader**

The word leader originates from the verb 'lead,' defined as to guide or to go before and show the way. A leader goes before others (a group, organization, or association) and guides them in a certain direction. In management, a leader is a person that can influence people to move toward achieving a shared vision (Juneja, 2015). This ability to influence and guide people to follow a particular course is called leadership. A leader starts with having a vision that is shared with others. Secondly, the leader must connect with people, be emphatic, and motivate them to work towards achieving the common vision. The leader must also support their followers in achieving the vision. They lead at the forefront and have a sense of responsibility. They know when to take risks and allow others to take the initiative. They invest in team building and collaboration. For people to attain a common goal, they must work together collaboratively and cohesively. Finally, leaders influence, improve and develop others into stars.

Leadership is not defined by formal authority or legitimate power. Formal authority is the kind of power that is derived from positions that leaders hold. Leaders do not rely on such power (although some hold respectable positions). Instead, they rely on informal authorities, which originates from the trust that people have placed on them and their judgment ability, moral principles, and respect for their integrity and expertise (Juneja, 2015). This is the kind of power that leaders use to influence their subordinates. Leaders win the trust and respect of people through free will. It becomes easier for leaders to exercise influence over their followers since it is based on choice. Leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela only held official, authoritative positions for a short time, but their influence exceeded even beyond their legitimate power. As such, leadership is not authority.

#### **1.3 Teachers Are Significant Leaders**

Teachers are leaders in the classroom, school, and the entire education system. Teachers lead by example through their actions, speech, and behavior. They are responsible for taking students through the challenging learning activities and possibly lead them to success. This sense of responsibility makes them leaders even if they hold no official, authoritative position. Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) suggest that effective teaching transcends beyond just disseminating information to students. It requires effective teaching, communication, and management skills.

Teachers must know how best to present the learning material to students. They must cultivate maximum student involvement and enhance their learning. They must know how to manage their classrooms effectively. According to Bolkan and Goodboy (2009), leadership is an essential resource that teachers can draw from to become more effective.

Research affirms that the notion of teacher leadership is one that has been developed over time. Pounder (2006) breaks down the understanding of teacher leadership into three waves (periods). In the first wave, teacher leadership was confined within legitimate power in organizational hierarchies. In this case, a teacher was only perceived as a leader if they assumed official positions such as school administrators or departmental heads. In the second wave, more emphasis was placed on the instructional element of teaching. However, leadership was still vested in formal positions. Teacher leaders included positions such as curriculum developers or team heads. The second wave separated teacher leaders from the conventional organizational positions.

The third wave (the current one) integrated teaching and leadership. The integration means that teacher leadership ceased being a positional concept. Instead, it became a process through which educators are allowed to express their leadership abilities as they carry out their duties. Teacher leadership is no longer defined by formalized positional duties but rather an array of behaviors and characteristics (Pounder, 2006). For this reason, researchers have developed numerous definitions of teacher leadership in the third wave. Whitehead and Greenier (2019) summarize these definitions, which link teacher leadership to informal and formal roles such as excellent classroom educators, change catalysts, mentors, resource providers, learning facilitators, curriculum specialists, researchers, and educational policymakers. In summary, Whitehead and Greenier (2019) define teacher leadership as a set of characteristics, qualities, and behaviors that educators exhibit both inside and outside the classroom, intending to positively influence students academically and socially. The National Education Association (2020) gives the following attributes of teacher leaders:

- They foster a collaborative culture to promote student learning and educator growth
- They use research to enhance student learning and practice
- They support continuous improvement through promoting professional learning
- They facilitate improvements in student learning
- They support the use of data and assessments to improve schools and districts
- They foster collaboration with families and communities
- They advocate for student learning and the teaching profession

The three waves show how teaching and leading have come from being separate education functions to integrated roles. Today, teachers do not need to occupy positions or specific roles to exercise leadership. All they need to make decisions are the right leadership qualities and attributes. By learning leadership and exercising it in classrooms and schools, teachers can significantly impact students, colleagues, and the community.

#### **1.4 Teachers Are Learners**

The process of becoming teacher leaders begins with becoming learners. Lieberman (2006) discusses several ways through which teachers develop into educational leaders. These ways are discussed below. Teachers learn to become leaders through:

- Reflecting on their practice. They learn from collaborating with other experienced colleagues (teacher leaders) in practice. They enquire more about teaching and learning in their practice.
- Reflecting on their life experiences and teaching style. This allows them to develop a strong commitment to their students, making them leaders.
- Being lifelong learners themselves. The more experience they acquire from the practice, the better they develop as teacher leaders.
- Going out of their comfort zones and trying out new experiments. Teacher leaders learn through modeling experimentation. They are always in search of best practices for student learning.
- Expanding the knowledge base (meeting new friends and leaders). Teachers must appreciate collegiality and interact with the professional community to learn from them.
- Being sensitive to culture and context. Teacher leaders learn from the contexts and cultures they exist in.

- Going public about their experience with students and understanding about teaching strategies and the curriculum. This welcomes the contributions of others.
- Constantly pursuing improvements with their peers and in the practice. Teacher leaders learn through seeking improvements to better their approach to teaching.

## **2. *Becoming a Teacher Leader***

The primary role of teachers is to disseminate classroom instructions to students. The classroom acts as the initial breeding ground for teacher leadership. This section focuses on the development of teacher leadership skills in the classroom. It entails three subtopics. The first subtopic describes how teacher leadership begins in the classroom. The second subtopic looks at why teachers should become leaders in the classroom. The final section gives examples of teachers being leaders in their classrooms.

### **2.1 Leading Students**

As explained in the above sections, teacher leadership transcends beyond the classroom environment to include the school and even the district. However, it is in the classroom where it all begins. Sanocki (2013) conducted a grounded theory research study on how teachers become teacher leaders. The study identified that emergent teacher leaders, right from the beginning of the leadership journey, had their primary focus on positively impacting students. As such, in the entire process, teacher leaders considered themselves as classroom educators first. All teacher leaders join the profession to improve student learning. This constitutes the driving force behind their leadership work. In any case, Sanocki (2013) confirms that most teacher leaders will not be interested in leadership if their efforts result in zero impact on student learning.

The classroom is the foundation for teacher leadership. All teacher leaders start as classroom teachers with their sole responsibility being improving student learning. Ross (2019) identifies the classroom as the source of credibility and motivation for teachers. The emergence of these two factors steers the teacher into leadership. According to Ross (2019), classroom teachers often occupy a unique position as informal leaders. As a result of not having formalized roles, they are able to maintain a peer status that earns them credibility among their colleagues. As such, they are able to position themselves as sources of knowledge for their peers who consider them as equals. This credibility slowly builds up into leadership. Secondly, being in the classroom (close to students) allows teachers to dedicate themselves to improving student learning. As a result, they develop a strong desire and interest to improve their own teaching practices and address problems in their learning community. In turn, this acts as a motivation to engage in leadership to fulfill their professional interests (enhance student learning). Credibility and motivation make the classroom the perfect breeding ground for emergent teacher leaders.

### **2.2 Instructional Leadership**

Classroom teacher leadership is essential for uplifting the overall performance of students in academics and social life. Espania (2012) discusses the instructional leadership of classroom teachers. Teachers play three crucial leadership functions in the classroom: role models, facilitators, and mediators (Espania, 2012). As role models, teacher leaders serve as examples to both students and other peers. They set the standard in the classroom through their behavior, character, and actions. They model the integrity and moral values of students. Additionally, teacher leaders are experienced and possess excellent communication and interpersonal skills. They have an intense passion for improving learning and conduct themselves with high professionalism. This makes them the perfect role models for other emergent teacher leaders.

Teacher leaders in the class are also facilitators of learning. They can look at classroom problems and find ways to solve them. They are able to identify weak areas and analyze how to improve them (Warren, 2018). They interact with their students, understand their learning needs, and design effective strategies to lead them to academic success. They put the best interest of learners at heart. They use classroom data and seek insights from research for decision-making (Warren, 2018). They know how best to present and teach content to students.

Finally, teacher leaders are the mediators between the classroom and the school administration. Classroom teacher leaders eliminate the convectional top-down hierarchy in schools and pave the way for parallel leadership (Espania, 2012). Administrators and teacher leaders engage in collective action to improve the school's instructional capacity. For instance, classroom teacher leaders can analyze the required resources for learning and

inform the administration in due time. They act as the bridge between the administration and the classroom. This ensures that students' needs in the classroom are aligned with reforms at the school, district, state, and national level. These three roles make classroom teacher leadership extremely important for ensuring student success.

### **2.3 Instructional Leader in the Classroom**

A teacher qualifies to be a leader if they initiate or participate in any activity that positively impacts the classroom, school, or district. There are many ways in which teacher leaders can bring positive change to the classroom. Any teacher can be a leader. Below are some examples showing teachers being leaders in the classroom:

- Teachers mentoring students on educational and social matters (Harrison & Killion, 2007).
- Teachers providing high-quality instruction to students and leading with integrity.
- Teachers taking the initiative to identify and address improvement areas in the classroom and provide instructional resources to learners (Harrison & Killion, 2007).
- Teachers organizing and analyzing classroom data to design better teaching approaches (Harrison & Killion, 2007).
- Teachers promoting active learning in the classroom.

## **3. Leading Students**

This section aims at addressing the relationship between classroom teacher leadership and students' achievement and growth. The section entails three subtopics. The first subtopic addresses how students' growth and achievement is the primary purpose of teacher leaders. The second subtopic focuses on the relationship between teacher leadership and students' academic performance. The last subtopic describes how teacher leaders consider students' achievement and growth as the primary measure of their effectiveness.

### **3.1 Student Performance**

Despite assuming numerous responsibilities both within and outside the classroom, teacher leaders always focus on positively impacting student learning. Sanocki (2013) found that one universal theme among teacher leaders is their shared belief that all efforts, whether formally or informally, should be centered on improving student learning. According to the study, students set the tone for any leadership work that teachers embark on. This shared belief among teacher leaders helps them use all their efforts in the classroom and school to continually focus on students' growth and achievement. Danielson (2006) asserts that despite desiring to extend their influence, teacher leaders prefer working as teachers rather than becoming administrators. This stems from the belief that exercising leadership as a teacher impacts student learning more than roles that detach them from the classroom. For teachers, students' achievement and growth is their main driving factor to leadership.

### **3.2 Student Achievement**

Research identifies several factors that influence student success in academics. These factors include class size, district funding, family and community engagement, and teacher leadership (Warren, 2018). Teacher leadership is considered the most influential factor in students' academic performance. New Teacher Center (2017) revealed that schools at higher levels in teacher leadership performed better than their lower-ranked counterparts. The performances of learners in institutions at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of teacher leadership ranked at the 56<sup>th</sup> percentile in math and language arts. Those in institutions at the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of teacher leadership only managed to reach the 45<sup>th</sup> percentile in the same subjects (New Teacher Center, 2017). Calderone et al. (2018) found that students taught by teacher leaders performed better in advanced science and math classes compared to their peers under a non-leader teacher. The former had an average of 83.99% and 84.22% in advanced science and math respectively across four quarters, compared to the latter, who managed 74.54% and 66.27% (Calderone et al., 2018). These findings show that teacher leadership and academic success are directly linked. Students in classes with effective teacher leaders are likely to succeed.

### **3.3 Student Growth**

Unlike other professions, teacher leaders understand that effectiveness in teaching cannot be measured by their background experience, where they schooled, or even their qualifications (Warren, 2018). Instead, they know that their performance in the classroom judges their effectiveness. Their success depends on how they drive students towards academic performance and growth. As such, they invest time in improving their teaching performance

and providing quality education to students. They improve their verbal ability, content knowledge, understanding of the student needs, and personality traits (integrity, fairness, dedication, attitude, and enthusiasm) (Warren, 2018). This positions them as better teachers and leaders in the classroom hence drive students towards academic success.

#### **4. Impact of Teachers**

Teachers only require leadership within them to can make a difference. The five subtopics in this section analyze how teacher leaders can make a difference in their classrooms. The opening subtopic explores how lack of leadership in the classroom affects student outcomes. The second subtopic describes how promoting teacher leadership will lead to improved student achievement. The third subtopic discusses the importance of teachers taking responsibility in their classrooms. The fourth part looks at how teachers add value to their classroom leadership role to strengthen their profession. The last part focuses on how teachers strengthen their leadership skills by maintaining a continuous focus on student achievement.

##### **4.1 Importance of Teacher Leadership**

Classroom teacher leadership has a direct positive impact on student performance. The lack of classroom teacher leadership minimizes student learning and achievement. Being an effective teacher leader means having the capability to provide good learning and teaching process to students, understand their unique needs, and stimulate them to be achievers (Warren, 2018). Without leadership, teachers will be unable to achieve classroom management. They will fail to know how best to tailor content to students, challenge and motivate them to achieve academic goals, and cultivate a learning culture. In the end, they will be unable to sustain the educational needs of their students, hence setting them up for failure. The New Teacher Center (2017) report shows that schools at lower levels in teacher leadership performed poorly compared to their counterparts in higher ranks. Without leadership, it is challenging to guarantee academic success in the classroom.

##### **4.2 Results of Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leadership is an essential success factor for student learning. Badiali (2018) describes teacher leadership as a sleeping giant in every school that, if woken up, can lead to positive changes to student learning. Calderone et al. (2018) describe a model of how teacher leadership impacts student achievement. According to the model, promoting and supporting teacher leadership leads to improvement in learning and teaching practices. These include developing positive teacher-student learning relationships, establishing practical classroom goals and routines, and improving instructional, assessment, and curricular practices (Calderone et al., 2018). All these changes result in enhanced student learning and achievement. Motivation is the main factor required to promote teacher leadership. According to Warren (2018), motivation can be built by encouraging teachers to share ideas, collaborate and support other colleagues, form relationships with parents, participate in professional development activities (for example, classroom visitation), and participate in school improvement initiatives.

##### **4.3 Being A Responsible Leader**

Assuming the full responsibility of a classroom teacher leader enables educators to create maximum intelligence in students. Wiseman et al. (2013) studied how leaders manage to make their subordinates smart and more intelligent. They realized that leaders are either diminishers or multipliers. Diminishers are leaders who hold the belief that their organization is made of a few smart people; hence the subordinates cannot figure out things without them. Multipliers perceive their subordinates as capable and intelligent individuals. They recognize this intelligence (unique skills), provoke it, and cultivate it to allow continuous growth of the subordinate (Wiseman et al., 2013). In the end, they make all subordinates around them smarter and more productive. Teacher leadership converts ordinary classroom educators into multipliers. They believe that each student in their classroom is a brilliant mind and capable of achieving academic success. With this belief in mind, teacher leaders tend to focus on bringing out the best in every student. They let each student know that they are smart. They give them challenges that push them to think harder and grow their intelligence. They actively engage students in the learning process, asking them more intriguing questions and allowing them to respond. They identify and cultivate the unique talents of students. They only play the role of facilitators and assisters, allowing students to take ownership of learning. Ultimately, students are encouraged to give their best.

#### **4.4 The Value of Teacher Leaders**

The status of teacher education today recognizes the centrality of teaching to educators, and thus, allows them to make a difference right from their classrooms. Instead of aiming at administrative roles to achieve professional development, teacher leaders today focus more on adding value to their classroom function to enhance student learning. Jacques et al. (2016) give several ways in which teachers add value to their role in the classroom:

- They collaborate and cooperate with other teachers and mentors in practice. This helps them learn from others, engage in introspection, and continuously improve their practice.
- They connect research with practice. Teacher leaders research and use evidence-based teaching practices to improve student learning. They translate research into practice in the most impactful way possible.
- They model effective practices. Classroom teacher leaders use their experience and knowledge to mentor and model effective practices for beginning teachers. Modeling gives beginning teachers the opportunity to learn and apply the best teaching practices.
- They embrace innovation. Classroom teacher leaders take the risk of trying out innovative instructional practices and modeling continuous improvement to promote student learning. This helps them grow as leaders.
- They become student's advocates. Teacher leaders build positive relationships with students, listening to their needs, mentoring them, and voicing out their problems. This helps create an inclusive learning environment that motivates students to learn.

#### **4.5 Magnitude of Teacher Leaders**

From being a novice to an experienced senior, teacher leaders are primarily driven by the strong desire to continuously improve student learning. Sanocki (2013) asserts that most teacher leaders do not even consider their work as leadership. They only focus on taking the appropriate decision and actions to enhance student learning. It's through accomplishing these goals that they develop as leaders. All begin as classroom instructors in charge of managing learners. With time, they develop a sense of responsibility for all students in the school. This sense of responsibility drives them to collaborate with other colleagues. They engage in research and decision-making in the school. They lead in finding innovative solutions to learning problems. They even model best practices for beginning teachers. In each of these roles, they acquire new leadership skills and develop as effective teacher leaders. All these come as a courtesy to their unwavering focus on student achievement.

### **5. Discussion**

The study looks at the concept of teacher leadership, particularly how it influences learners in the classroom. One of the study's key findings is that unlike before, where the term leadership in school was always linked to administration and official positions, today, every teacher can make a difference right from their classroom. Leadership is not about positions; it is about the person, their characteristics, and behavior. Leadership in the classroom converts teachers to motivators. Their influence exceeds beyond just teaching, and they take the role of ensuring that learners are motivated to achieve their academic goals. As motivators, they become student advocates, facilitators of learning, researchers for best practices, mediators (with the administration), role models of behavior and professionalism, and collaborators with other colleagues.

Another important finding in the study is that teacher leadership is centrally driven by the shared belief that all educators' efforts, whether formally or informally, are supposed to improve student learning. This is a belief that distinguishes teacher leadership from administration and management. The study reveals that teacher leaders, whether beginning or experienced, always desire to use their position and influence to impact student learning. For this reason, teacher leaders prefer exerting their influence not as administrators but as educators. As educators, they can ensure close proximity to students and thus impact their learning better than administrators.

It is also evident that the classroom is the foundation of teacher leadership. The classroom serves as the best environment where teachers can have a direct impact on students. It is in the classroom that teachers have the first-hand contact with student needs. As a result, they develop a strong desire and interest to improve their own teaching practices and address problems in their learning community. This, in turn, acts as a motivation to engage in leadership. The centrality of the classroom to teacher leaders remains a constant factor throughout their careers. Even as they assume more leadership roles outside the classroom, they never accept to stay away from their



students. This stems from the belief that exercising leadership as a teacher impacts student learning more than roles that detach them from the classroom.

Lastly, classroom teacher leaders are the most instrumental factor in student achievement and success. From this study, research has proven that students taught by teacher leaders have a high probability of succeeding academically compared to those under non-leader educators. Teacher leaders are considered as multipliers. They perceive each of their students as brilliant minds and thus motivate them to pursue their academic goals. Without leadership in the classroom, teachers will not understand the students, nor will they help them achieve their educational goals. It is only imperative that stakeholders in education promote teacher leadership, especially in the classroom.

## 6. Conclusion

The study showcases the importance of teacher leadership in the classroom in the academic progress of students. The quality of teachers in the classroom is a crucial determinant to learners' success in the entire school. Learners taught by excellent educators are more likely to achieve their academic goals than those under a less effective teacher. Teacher leadership is the solution to effective and outstanding teaching and learning. Teacher leaders are highly motivated to enhance student achievement. Stakeholders in education should place significant emphasis on promoting classroom teacher leadership. They should design effective strategies to ensure that the current crop of teachers understands the importance and role of teacher leaders. They should ensure that more non-leader teachers transform into leaders. This will facilitate the success of the class, school, and district, and hence build a well-educated population that will secure America's future.

## 7. Future Research

One area that has not received significant attention in the current study is the promotion of teacher leadership. There is a need for future research to study effective strategies of ensuring that more non-leader teachers transform into outstanding leaders in the classroom, especially in the current educational context that is largely influenced by technology. The current body of knowledge already entails significant literature on how non-leader educators become leaders; however, very few have focused on improving the transitions. Over the years, the transition to teacher leadership has largely been an implicit consequence of continuous teaching. It's high time that promoting classroom teacher leadership becomes a direct action initiated by the major players in the education sector. This will only be achieved if researchers establish a rich body of work, illustrating the best practices to promote teacher leadership in the classroom.

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