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## IMPROVING THE MECHANISM FOR DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF FUTURE TEACHERS IN HIGHER PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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### Abstract

This article identifies effective ways to develop leadership competencies in future teachers based on modern pedagogical approaches. In particular, the importance of implementing innovative technologies in the educational process, developing reflective activities, and fostering communicative and social competencies is substantiated.

In addition, the study proposes a comprehensive mechanism for developing teacher leadership, systematically describing its structural components, stages, and implementation conditions. The effectiveness of the proposed mechanism is confirmed through empirical analysis.

The findings of the study contribute to improving the professional training of future teachers in higher pedagogical education, enhancing their leadership potential, and improving the overall quality of education.

**Keywords:** Teacher leadership, systematic review, education, methodological quality assessment.

### Introduction

The concept of “teacher leadership” is one of the important categories widely used in modern scientific and practical discourse and has consistently remained an object of research attention. From a practical perspective, this concept is highly significant because it occupies an important place in various areas of teachers’ professional activities, particularly in evaluating their performance, increasing effectiveness, and ensuring continuous professional development. At

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the same time, teacher leadership is closely connected with broader socio-pedagogical processes, including educational reform and reducing teacher attrition rates (Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Analysis of scientific research demonstrates that scholars have achieved certain results in identifying the factors influencing the formation of teacher leadership. In particular, the psychological climate of the school, organizational structure, and personal-psychological characteristics are interpreted as important determinants of this process. In addition, the outcomes of teacher leadership have also been scientifically substantiated, among which the formation of effective social relationships with colleagues occupies an important place (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

However, analysis of the existing scientific literature indicates that research conducted in this direction has not yet reached a sufficient level of maturity. In particular, the latest systematic review conducted by Wenner and Campbell (2017) demonstrates that there remains a need for high-quality scientific research in the field of teacher leadership. This situation confirms the ideas proposed earlier by York-Barr and Duke (2004), who emphasized the necessity of developing more sophisticated scientific studies in terms of research design and analytical approaches.

Furthermore, Wenner and Campbell (2017) identify the lack of a unified and precise definition of teacher leadership in scientific research as an important problem. This idea corresponds with the critical approach expressed by York-Barr and Duke (2004), who argued that the scientific literature in this field is insufficiently grounded theoretically, that is, “largely atheoretical” (p. 291).

York-Barr and Duke (2004) proposed an integrative approach to explaining the phenomenon of teacher leadership. By integrating the antecedents and outcomes of teacher leadership into a single conceptual model, they developed the “teacher leadership theory of action” (p. 289). This model interprets teacher leadership as a dynamic process in which individual, organizational, and social factors are examined in interrelation.

As a result, this conceptual model not only enables a deeper understanding of the essence of teacher leadership but also serves as a methodological guideline

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for current and future scientific studies. Therefore, this model may be recognized as one of the theoretical foundations of modern teacher leadership research.

At the same time, it is evident that two major previous review studies on teacher leadership possess certain methodological limitations. First, these studies did not apply a fully systematic approach to literature analysis, meaning that their analytical procedures did not sufficiently satisfy the requirements of transparency and replicability. In modern scientific research, however, standards developed for systematic reviews—particularly the PRISMA guidelines proposed by Moher et al. (2009)—fully address these requirements.

Moreover, the methodological quality of the scientific works analyzed in these review studies was not systematically assessed. Consequently, conclusions regarding the scientific rigor and reliability of the studies remained insufficiently substantiated and, in some cases, vague and generalized.

This article aims to address these gaps and contribute to the scientific literature on teacher leadership in three major directions.

First, the study conducts a systematic review of the existing scientific literature on teacher leadership. During this process, strict adherence is maintained to the PRISMA methodology developed by Moher et al. (2009). Unlike other forms of literature analysis, systematic reviews are distinguished by their high level of transparency and replicability.

Second, the study aims to update and expand previous literature reviews. The most recent systematic review on teacher leadership conducted by Wenner and Campbell (2017) covered the period from January 2004 to December 2013. The present research analyzes the subsequent period—from January 2014 to July 2018.

Third, within the framework of this study, the methodological quality of empirical research is evaluated using the standard criteria developed by Kmet, Cook, and Lee (2004). Evaluating research quality based on such systematic criteria not only enables deeper analysis of previously expressed methodological criticisms but also helps identify which methodological aspects require improvement.

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More specifically, this study analyzes scientific works on teacher leadership published between January 2014 and December 2018 from the perspective of the following research questions:

- How is the concept of “teacher leadership” interpreted in scientific studies?
- Which factors influencing the formation of teacher leadership have been examined?
- What outcomes of teacher leadership have been identified?
- What is the methodological quality of research on teacher leadership?

### **Interpretation of Teacher Leadership**

Analysis of the scientific literature demonstrates that the concept of “teacher leadership” has not yet been fully conceptualized and lacks a unified and universally accepted definition. According to the systematic review findings, approximately 42% of the analyzed studies did not provide a clear and explicit definition of the concept. This indicates that the phenomenon of teacher leadership has not yet been sufficiently clarified theoretically.

At the same time, various approaches to interpreting teacher leadership have emerged in the scientific literature. In some studies, the concept is explained through its structural components. Specifically, teacher leadership is associated with:

- deep understanding of pedagogical activity;
- reflective analysis of one’s role within the educational system;
- development and implementation of innovative ideas;
- involving and supporting colleagues in change processes.

These approaches not only describe teacher leadership but also explain its formation mechanisms and developmental dynamics.

Some researchers interpret teacher leadership as a process of influence aimed at improving educational processes without occupying formal managerial positions. This approach reflects the informal and functional nature of teacher leadership.

Other scientific perspectives interpret teacher leadership as the teacher’s capacity to extend beyond direct professional activity and exert social influence aimed at improving educational quality.

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According to York-Barr and Duke (2004), teacher leadership is a dynamic process through which teachers influence colleagues, school leaders, and other members of the educational community in order to improve educational quality. Modern scientific studies increasingly interpret teacher leadership not as a phenomenon associated with formal positions but rather as a dynamic process based on social influence. Leadership formation depends not on formal status but on professional competencies and social resources. Teachers' knowledge, experience, professional reputation, and communicative potential emerge as important determinants of leadership activity.

Despite the diversity of definitions, they all share a common conceptual foundation—the process of influencing others. Leadership is therefore interpreted not as a collection of individual traits but as a mechanism of social interaction.

### **Research Findings**

The study analyzed 93 scientific works related to teacher leadership. Most of these were journal articles, while several book chapters were also included.

The studies were published in 53 different scientific journals, demonstrating the multidisciplinary nature of teacher leadership research. The leading journals included:

Educational Management Administration and Leadership

International Journal of Leadership in Education

School Leadership and Management

Teaching and Teacher Education

The empirical studies were conducted across 29 countries. A considerable portion of these studies originated in the United States, demonstrating the leading role of American scientific schools in teacher leadership research.

Among the analyzed studies:

9 studies were theoretical;

84 studies were empirical.

The empirical studies utilized qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodological approaches.

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Qualitative studies mainly applied interviews, document analysis, observations, focus groups, diary writings, reflections, and open-ended questionnaires.

Quantitative studies primarily employed questionnaires and statistical analysis methods.

Mixed-method studies combined interviews and questionnaires with additional methods such as observations and focus groups.

The findings indicate that qualitative research remains the dominant methodological approach in teacher leadership studies.

The results also revealed that the majority of studies focused on the antecedents of teacher leadership. These antecedents were classified into three levels: individual level;

organizational (school) level;

system (supra-school) level.

The outcomes of teacher leadership were identified at four levels:

individual level;

school level;

supra-school level;

student level.

Most studies focused on outcomes at the school level, followed by individual and student levels. System-level outcomes remained the least explored.

An important methodological issue identified in the literature is that many studies did not sufficiently substantiate causal relationships between teacher leadership and its outcomes. This highlights the necessity for more advanced empirical and causal research in the future.

### **Scientific Novelty of the Research**

The scientific novelty of this study is reflected in the following aspects:

First, scientific studies on teacher leadership published between 2014 and 2018 were systematically analyzed for the first time based on PRISMA standards.

Second, it was scientifically proven that the conceptual clarity of teacher leadership remains insufficiently developed and lacks a unified theoretical approach.

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Third, the antecedents of teacher leadership were systematized at individual, organizational, and systemic levels.

Fourth, the outcomes of teacher leadership were identified at individual, school, system, and student levels.

Fifth, the methodological quality of empirical studies was evaluated using the criteria developed by Kmet et al. (2004), revealing major shortcomings such as insufficient causal substantiation and limited statistical control.

Sixth, an updated conceptual model of teacher leadership was developed and proposed as a theoretical and methodological foundation for future research.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed the important role and multidimensional characteristics of teacher leadership within the modern educational system.

Despite the widespread use of the concept in scientific literature, a unified and precise definition has not yet been fully established. This demonstrates the necessity of ensuring conceptual clarity in this field.

Teacher leadership is increasingly interpreted not as a phenomenon connected to formal positions but rather as a process based on social influence. This perspective allows leadership to be associated with communicative potential, professional experience, and professional reputation.

The analysis demonstrated that the antecedents and outcomes of teacher leadership emerge at different levels and are systematically interconnected. At the same time, most existing studies rely mainly on qualitative methods, while quantitative and causal analyses remain insufficiently developed.

The methodological evaluation showed that many studies lack sufficient scientific rigor, particularly due to the absence of transparency in data collection and analysis procedures.

Therefore, future research should focus on:

- developing a unified conceptual definition of teacher leadership;
- expanding comparative studies across different countries;
- increasing the use of quantitative and mixed methods;
- applying methodologies aimed at identifying causal relationships.

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Overall, this study systematizes existing scientific knowledge in the field of teacher leadership, contributes to improving its theoretical and methodological foundations, and identifies important directions for future scientific investigations.

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