

A Systematic Review of Collaborative Leadership Models and Their Impact on Educational Quality

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ABSTRACT

The view of the collaborative leadership also has gained a great deal of importance in educational administration, especially with the advanced complexity of educational institutions, which needs to deliver high-quality education. The traditional leader-children model of participative hierarchical management that focuses on centralized decision making and authority is slowly being displaced by a collaborative model of leadership that puts a strong emphasis on teamwork, participation, shared decision making and shared responsibility. The actual focus of this systematic review is on the key collaborative leadership models and their effect on educational quality. The study draws its conclusions on the basis of the results of the empirical and theoretical study carried out in the previous years, in the period between 2000 and 2026. Differing forms of collaborative leadership, such as distributed leadership, shared leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and professional learning communities are explored. Literature searches revealed areas of increased teacher performance, student achievement, school climate, teacher development, school improvement, and institutional effectiveness associated with collaborative leadership. Team leadership fosters trust, communication, creativeness among educational stakeholders and is a crucial aspect of accountability. But obstacles to collaborative leadership practices include resistance to change, lack of trust, organizational barriers and weak leadership capacity building. Overall, the results of the study indicate that collaborative leadership has a significant impact on improving the quality of education and that adopting more collaborative leadership can be aided by policy reform, leadership development programs and support systems in organizations.

Keywords: *collaborative leadership, educational leadership, educational quality, distributed leadership, school improvement, teacher collaboration, systematic review*

INTRODUCTION

Societies are viewed as having education as one of the most vital pillars for social, economic and cultural advancement. The educational institutions should yield educated, skilled and responsible humans and for his positive contribution to the society. In most educational institutions, the effectiveness of teaching and learning outcomes largely hinges on good practice of leadership in directing their developmental growth, teaching quality, and learning outcomes. Thus, the leadership of education is a key factor in developing the effectiveness of the institutions and in achieving educational success.

Conventionally, the educational leadership relied on hierarchical and bureaucratic arrangement in which educational principals and administrators imposed their top down control over the teachers and staff members of the school. In these systems, decisions in the system were mainly determined by administration and teachers' role within this system remained fairly passive in terms of decision making (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). But, due to the changes in the education systems, the advancement of technology, globalisation and the complexity of institutions, there is a need for alternative leadership models to the traditional one and new collaborative models as a result.

Part of Leadership that has taken special expression in modern education is Collaborative Leadership as it encourages stakeholders in education including learners, teachers, parents, administrators, and community stakeholders, to participate, cooperate, collaborate, and share responsibility. Collaborative leadership acknowledges that it takes efforts of more than one leader to improve education. Rather, principals, teachers, administrators, parents, students and communities working to shared ends are needed (Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

To the extent that collaboration is becoming a key feature of the school culture, so is the focus on quality education. This is partly because collaboration is becoming a central part of the school culture and its focus is on education quality. Educational quality is the capacity of the educational institutions to create supportive learning atmospheres, and to achieve academic aims and positive student results along with effective learning experiences. (UNESCO 2015) The definition of effective leadership implies that this has a substantial impact on educational quality because leaders affect organisation culture, teacher performance, learning and teaching as well as the development of the institution.

There are a number of studies indicating collaborative leadership to have a positive effect on educational quality in several ways. When leading collaboratively, teachers experience better collaboration, professional development, innovation in their instruction, internal communications and climate in the school workplace (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Collaborative environments tend to be higher for teachers regarding motivation, commitment and job satisfaction. Moreover, effective leadership through collaboration fosters shared decision making and collective responsibility by improving the institutional effectiveness and school improvement.

Collaborative leadership further facilitates teachers' empowerment by engaging teachers in leadership roles and institution planning. Coactive involvement in leadership processes increases teacher commitment, professional engagement and quality of teaching and learning (Spillane, 2006). Collaborative learning situations also promote reflective practice, ongoing learning and problem solving, which are elements of educational improvement.

Even though collaborative leadership has numerous advantages, it has some drawbacks for learning environments as well. Implementing collaborative leadership practices is likely to be stunted by a combination of resistance to change, lack of trust, organisational barriers, time constraints and inadequate Leadership preparation. (Veale, 2010). It can be challenging to create contexts in schools with a rigid, bureaucratic structure in which "performing culture" is built, especially for maintaining shared culture and leadership.

This systematic review aims to objectively be critical about collaborative leadership models and investigate how these affect educational quality. In particular, the review seeks to uncover key collaborative leadership styles in education, to understand how they impact on the effectiveness of their institutions, and to highlight the challenges cooperative practice could present. This review builds this understanding through summarising previous research to firm up understanding and importance of collaborative leadership for educational improvement.

METHODOLOGY OF THE REVIEW

The design of this study used systematic review method, which is a type of research study based on the investigation and review of literature that contains the information of collaborative leadership model and educational quality. The design of this type of study was systematic review by reviewing literature related to collaborative leadership model and educational quality. A structured and comprehensive method that has been developed to identify, evaluate, and synthesize research findings related to a topic is called a systematic review (Snyder, 2019). In contrast to literature reviews, systematic reviews employ systematic procedures to decrease review bias and make sure the search and analysis of data is reliable.

The search strategy for the review process was researchers searching on academic databases and research platforms such as Google Scholar, Research Gate, ERIC, JSTOR, SpringerLink, Scopus and Frontiers in Education. The databases chosen are those that hold a large number of scholarly resources about educational leadership and school improvement. Some of the terms used when the search was conducted were: collaborative leadership, distributed leadership, shared leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, professional learning communities, educational quality, school improvement, and teacher collaboration. Different sets of these key words were used in order to seek relevant researches.

Studies identified for the review had to focus on collaborative leadership in educational settings and appear in peer-reviewed journals, books, dissertations, conference papers, and reports. Research done from 2000 to 2026 was incorporated to capture up to date education leadership practices. In order to gain insights into the implementation and impact of collaborative leadership models both qualitative and quantitative studies were considered because they offered insights into the model.

The review did not include studies not related to education, research non-academic articles or publications with lacking theoretical and empirical relevance. Thematic analysis of selected studies was conducted and the key themes drawn out identified were collaborative leadership models, quality education, effectiveness of institutions and challenges for implementation.

The collaborative leadership practices and their link with educational quality in a variety of education contexts was provided through the systematic review methodology; this helped in understanding the practices and the relationship.

CONCEPT OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Collaborative leadership is a style of leadership that involves teamwork, participation, communication, shared responsibilities and joint decision making. Not everyone who posits as a leader has an authoritarian or hierarchical style of leadership; collaborative leadership deals with relationship building and empowering contributions from the people in the organization (Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

Collaborative leadership in education is when the principal, the teachers, the administration, parents and the community work together to meet common educational objectives. In collaborative leadership, the notion of leadership is de-institutionalized by distributing it among stakeholders, depending on their expertise, experience, and institutional needs (Spillane 2006).

Collaborative leadership was the need of an hour due to the growth of organizations and the constraints of centralized leadership. The school now encounters all sorts of problems such as change in curriculum, a change in technology, a diversity of populations, demands for accountability, and a limited supply of resources. These problems don't need to be solved on an individual basis – they need solving as a team. Collaborative leadership is strongly linked to democratic leadership in terms of the importance it places

on participation, transparency, and shared leadership of decisions. The teachers are perceived not as mere implements of administration but as active members of the institution who contribute to its development. Thus, collaborative leadership encourages staff autonomy, participation and commitment. (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Spillane, 2006).

Collaborative leadership is said to enhance organizational culture through fostering trust, respect, and shared dialogues among the team members (Cook, 2021). Collaborative cultures are more likely to stimulate innovation instead of moulding it in the mold of conventional education, to reflect on learning, and to foster a continuous learning process within educational institutions. Collaborative teachers tend to share ideas for teaching, discuss problems and work together to find solutions to enhance teaching and learning cycles.

Collaborative leadership also plays a role in the learning of the organization, enabling the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of experiences between people in the organization. Ongoing collaboration creates higher quality collaborative relationships among educators and enhances their problem solving skills. The mutual relationships they form play a very important part in institutional effectiveness and the quality of education. (DuFour, 2004; Spillane, 2006).

Furthermore, collaborative leadership is based on the concept that the process of educational improvement requires the involvement of stakeholders. Parents, community and students are emerging very much as key decision makers. This greater involvement extends institutional accountability and builds relations between the schools and communities. (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Bush & Glover, 2014).

Collaborative Leadership is a transformation from a traditional, authoritarian approach towards a more democratic and inclusive leadership approach . It represents modern-day education values placed upon cooperation, collaboration, team work and shared responsibility for achieving success in education.

MAJOR COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP MODELS

In different institutional settings, leadership participating may be manifested in various stages of leadership in more or less controllable ways. In other institutional structures, collaborative leadership can be many things, depending on educational objectives, leadership philosophies, and the educational enterprise in more or less controllable ways. There are a number of leadership models that have been made salient in educational research and practice. Some of the most important models include distributed leadership, shared leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership and professional learning communities.

Distributed Leadership

One of the most significant collaborative leadership models employed in education is distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is spread out; more than one person has leadership responsibility in the organization; it's not all on a single leader (Spillane, 2006). Leadership roles are shared depending on the need and the expertise of the teachers, coordinators, department heads and administrators.

Distributed leadership involves teaming up and taking joint action in institutional governance. Teachers are involved in curriculum planning, mentoring, teaching improvement and policy implementation. This involvement boosts professional ownership and institutional commitment. The research findings suggest that distributed leadership has a positive impact on school improvement and school educational quality. Hallinger and Heck (2011) have identified distributed leadership as a positive strategy to enhance organizational capacity and instructional effectiveness through teacher collaboration and shared

responsibility. Distributed leadership frequently unlocks enhanced communication, organizational culture and outcomes that are reflected in better academic results at schools that have distributed leadership.

Another aspect of distributed leadership that is relevant to the issue of teacher professionalisation is that teachers are expected to acquire leadership experience, when they take part in institutional activities. Teachers that are active in leadership roles build confidence, decision making skills and teaching capacities. Reaching the potential of the distributed leadership requires that trust, support and communication are in place. Distributed leadership can be dysfunctional or uncoordinated without enabling institutional cultures.

Shared Leadership

Shared Leadership isn't sharing a job, but it is sharing the process of leadership, involving the sharing of influence and decision making within the group (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Shared leadership recognises leadership not as an individual task but one that is social and collaborative.

Shared leadership promotes collaboration between teachers and administration staff in education, for planning, problem-solving, and the development of the institution. Decision making is democratic—teachers are given opportunities to be part of the process of making decisions about educational policies and practices. Research indicates that shared leadership has a positive impact on teacher motivation, teacher satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Cook, 2021). Shared leadership models may enhance teachers' value and respect as their ideas and expertise are recognized. Shared leadership also boosts the trust and communication within the organization. Positive institutional relationships are established when teachers and administrators are in open dialogue. Such positive relationships play an important role in achieving the standard of education and effectiveness in the school.

Furthermore, shared leadership promotes collective accountability for institutional outcomes. Teachers and administrators jointly assume responsibility for achieving educational goals, improving instructional practices, and supporting student success.

Transformational Leadership

Another significant collaborative leadership model being broadly used in the field of education is transformational leadership. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate members of the organization to reach their team's goals, they stimulate innovation and change in the organization (Bass, 1985).

The four components of transformational leadership are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Transformational Leaders Build Shared Vision, Foster creativity and develop their followers, helping them to grow. Transformational leadership encourages teachers to work together and join in developing the institution in their educational setting. Transformational leadership has been proven to have a positive impact on teacher satisfaction, organizational commitment and student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Transformational leaders also help to instil innovation and continuous improvement in schools. They allow teachers to look at new teaching techniques, offer innovative methods, and allow for reflection in teaching. In this co-operative atmosphere the institutional Adaptability and quality of education is improving.

Furthermore, transformational leadership builds school culture, fosters a vision, values, trust and unity. Transformational leadership tends to be more effective in fostering positive relationships between teachers and staff, and increased teacher commitment to the school.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership has a particular attention on enhancing processes in teaching and learning in school. Instructional leaders work closely with teachers to improve curriculum implementation, instructional practices, classroom management and student achievement (Hallinger, 2005).

Collaborative instructional leadership is a process of ongoing communication and professional relationships between principals and teachers. Leaders offer teaching guidance, coaching, lesson insights and feedback to develop teachers. Instructional Leadership has been identified as a key factor in School Effectiveness and Academic Achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). In schools with efficient instructional leadership, one would, at least, expect to see good teaching and positive student learning outcomes. Instructional leadership also supports professional learning, by inviting teachers to join workshops, training programs and learning together. These cooperative activities enable teachers to enhance their teaching skills and confidence.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are groups of professionals who come together to enhance teaching and learning results for students (DuFour, 2004). Teamwork, collective learning, reflective practice, and continuous improvement are the key elements of PLCs.

Teachers regularly meet with one another within PLCs to discuss issues in their instructions, review students' results, share teaching strategies, and troubleshoot and solve educational challenges. These interactions enhance professional learning and quality teaching. The research shows the effect of PLC is positive as it affects teacher's collaboration, innovation and educational quality (Bhutto et al., 2024). PLCs are made more common in schools, resulting in improved cultures of trust, communication and shared accountability among staff. PLCs can also be a way of improving teacher empowerment as teachers themselves are involved in the learning and improving processes of the institution. Collaborative learning environments support teachers to be reflective, capable of tailoring teaching-learning practices to help students.

IMPACT OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP ON EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

The team leadership has a wider ranging impact on the quality of education. The sense of a positive correlation between collaborative leadership practices and institutional effectiveness, teacher performance, organizational climate and student achievement has been shown in the literature repeatedly.

Teacher Collaboration and Professional Development

Collaborative leadership's greatest effect is greater teacher cooperation. Collaborative leadership exists, which provides teachers with opportunities to share information, troubleshoot and work together. Cooperation of teachers enhances teaching since it means teachers exchange techniques, experiences and professional knowledge. Conferencing allows teachers to work together and minimize professional isolation effects, enhance collegial working, and develop the ability to work collaboratively. Collaborative leadership also fosters professional development as the teachers are invited to attend workshops, mentoring sessions, PLCs and leadership development activities. Collaborative learning typically has the effect of improving the instructional expertise and leadership of the teachers. Collaboration of professionals is found to play a major role in the quality of education as teachers develop their own skills and learn from each other in education (DuFour, 2004).

Student Achievement and Learning Outcomes

Collaborative leadership's positive connection to student achievement is detailed in a few studies. Hallinger and Heck (2011) determined that the impact of collaborative leadership on better learning outcomes has a mediating pathway through better instructional quality and organizational capacity. The overall improvement of the process of curriculum implementation, classroom management, teaching and learning through collaborative leadership, which leads to the improvement of children's academic performance. Teams and shared responsibility in the school provide more supportive and engaging learning environments in schools. Collaborative leadership also fosters uniformity of teaching approach by having teachers co-planning lessons, talking about student progress, and making decisions about teaching methods that are connected to the institution's goals. These joint working arrangements are effective in improving the quality of education and learning obtained. (Hallinger & Heck, 2011; DuFour, 2004).

Positive Organizational Climate

Positive organizational climates in the school setting are greatly aided by collaborative leadership. Organizational climate is a general atmosphere, communication, relationship and working environment in schools. Trust and respect, teamwork and open communication are expected in a collaborative environment between teachers and administration. Positive organizational climates positively influence teacher morale, job satisfaction and institutional commitment. Positive organizational climates would increase the likelihood of school attaining educational objectives as staff members focus on common objectives working collaboratively. Positive climates also reduce conflicts and improve the institutional's stability at the workplace. (Cook, 2021).

Teacher Empowerment and Motivation

Collaborative leadership involves collaboration of teachers in decision making processes of the institution, which empowers the teachers. Those teachers who are involved in leadership activities tend to feel more valued, respected and professionally confident. Empowerment of the teachers helps to improve their motivation and institutional commitment. Collaborative teachers are more likely to be creative, demonstrate initiative, and be innovative in their teaching methods.

Studies indicate that empowered teachers play a major role in impacting the success and quality of education, as they become more interested in the learning responsibilities placed on students and improving educational institutions (Pearce & Conger, 2003).

Innovation and School Improvement

Team leadership fosters innovative practices and ongoing enhancement of schools. School contexts that are part of a collaborative culture are more flexible and responsive to the evolving educational needs. Effective participation in decision-making nurtures innovative solutions and the exploration and testing of new thinking about teaching and learning. Strategies for institutional challenges and/or for improving education are developed jointly by teachers and administrators.

Studies have shown that collaborative leadership in schools have been shown to have an impact on the organizational learning and institutional effectiveness (Mondal, 2020).\

CHALLENGES OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

While collaborative leadership can have many benefits, there are likewise several difficulties that could present difficulties in the way. There are plenty of advantages to collaborative leadership, but a lot of challenges can stand in the way in educational institutions.

The most notable threat to collaborative leadership is opposition to change. However, when the leadership approach is participative, there is a risk of losing their authority or control which can inhibit teachers and administrators. A lack of trust sometimes also affects the effective collaboration. Open communication and respect between colleagues is a key aspect of collaborative leadership. When there is not enough trust, co-operation and working together can become ineffective and even hostile. Another significant challenge is the time constraint. Meetings, discussion, planning sessions and professional exchanges are key components of collaborative leadership and are time-consuming and costly demands on institutions. Training in collaborative leadership to a lesser degree may be constrained by inadequate leadership training. Numerous school leaders have little or no formal training in communication, conflict management, team building and problem solving within a team. (Veale, 2010).

However, the lack of strong collaboration and communication at school level can also be a challenge related to organizational barriers like rigid bureaucracy, centralized policies and limited institutional support.

CONCLUSION

Collaborative leadership is viewed as a positive paradigm of leadership in today's schools that can significantly affect the quality of the education and effectiveness of the school as an organization. This systematic review has shown that collaborative leadership, including distributed leadership, shared leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and professional learning communities can significantly enhance teacher collaboration, teacher professional learning, organizational climate, school improvement and student achievement.

Leading together fosters trust, communication, involvement and joint responsibility among education stakeholders. Collaborative-teachers typically exhibit greater level of motivation, commitment and instruction effectiveness when teaching in collaborative settings. In addition, collaborative leadership promotes a spirit of innovation and ongoing institutional evaluation through reflective practice and problem-solving in groups.

Although participatory leadership is challenging, it is nevertheless a good approach to enhance educational quality in today's modern educational system. Policies and practice for collaborative leadership should be continued to be encouraged in schools, along with leadership development initiatives and cultures that support it. Further collaborative leadership research is needed in other educational settings and a search is needed for how to get collaborative leadership in place in contexts that encounter barriers to implementation.

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