

PASSING THE BUCK: THIS IS NOT TEACHER LEADERSHIP!
Callie Grant and Hitashi Singh

Abstract

Despite an enabling democratic policy framework, the leadership of many South African schools remains firmly within the formal management structure at the top of the hierarchy. The potential for teacher leadership is relatively untapped and, where it is enacted, it is often restricted. This article reports on a small qualitative study which explored how the School Management Teams in two primary schools either promoted or posed a barrier to the development of teacher leadership. Using questionnaire and interview data, it emerged that a form of teacher leadership existed in each of the two schools but within a hierarchical school structure and authorised distributed leadership. SMT members used their legitimate leadership positions to delegate leadership to people they saw fit for the role, while they withheld leadership from others. This article argues for a two-fold shift in leadership thinking, an awakening of the 'sleeping giant' of teacher leadership at an individual level in schools together with a shift in power relations and a melt down of the 'hierarchy mentality', at the level of the organisation. Without this shift, a culture of genuine collegiality in schools is unlikely and the effects of this on teaching and learning will be felt for years to come.

Key words: Distributed leadership, teacher leadership, autocratic leadership, delegation, contrived collegiality

Introduction

During the period of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, government legislation perpetuated a society of inequality based on race class and gender. To control this inequality, government policies promoted centralised, authoritarian control of education at all levels within the system (Grant, 2006). Today, within a democratic South Africa, the *South African Schools' Act* (1996), the *Government Gazette of the Norms and Standards for Educators* (2000) as well as the *Task Team Report on Education Management* (1996) challenge schools to review their management practices, which have traditionally been top-down, and create a whole new approach to managing schools where management is 'seen as an activity in which all members of educational organisations engage' and should 'not be seen as the task of a few' (DOE, 1996, 27). Here it can be seen that, in the context of government legislation, the term 'education management' is often used in preference to 'education leadership'. This signals either a potential slippage in usage of the two terms or an emphasis on management processes at the expense of leadership. We argue that 'leadership' and 'management' are distinct processes with 'leadership' being the process which works towards movement and change in an organisation while 'management' is the process which works towards the stability, preservation and maintenance of the organisation (Astin and Astin, 2000). Like Kotter (1990), we believe that the two processes compliment each other and *both* are needed for an organisation to prosper.

Mosage and van der Westhuizen describe the task of converting the 'proliferation of legislation' introduced so soon after South Africa became a democracy, as 'daunting' (1997, 196) while Moloi (2002) suggests that although our new education policies call for new ways of managing

schools, many remain unresponsive and retain their rigid structures with principals unable to shift from their patriarchal and hierarchical ways of thinking. Against this backdrop, this article explores whether leadership (and here we mean the process of fostering purposive and value based change) in two KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) schools has indeed shifted to become more participatory and inclusive. One such participatory and inclusive type has been termed 'distributed leadership' (Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2004) which is based on the premise that leadership should be shared throughout an organisation, such as a school, where there are "multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent by a common culture" (Harris and Muijs, 2005, 31). This alternate form of leadership allows for the emergence of teacher leadership as one of the multiple sources of guidance and direction. Teacher leadership offers a radical departure from the traditional understanding of school leadership because it moves away from the premise of leadership in relation to position in the organisation and instead views leadership as a process which is shared and which "involves working with all stakeholders in a collegial and creative way to seek out the untapped leadership potential of people and develop this potential in a supportive environment for the betterment of the school" (Grant, forthcoming). In its simplest form, teacher leadership is understood as leadership exercised by teachers regardless of position or designation (Harris and Muijs, 2005). In the South African context the concept of teacher leadership is relatively new but, particularly at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, it is slowly emerging as an area of research interest (see Grant, 2005; Grant, 2006; Rajagopaul, 2007; Singh, 2007; Khumalo, 2008; Ntuzela, 2008; Grant, forthcoming).

Within the broad framework of distributed leadership theory, our article explores the role of the School Management Team (SMT) in promoting or hindering teacher leadership. In developing our argument we first present relevant literature on distributed leadership theory and teacher leadership. Drawing on qualitative research in two KZN primary schools, we then briefly sketch the context of our two research schools and outline the methodology and methods used. We then move on to a discussion of the findings and the article concludes by signalling the need for a radical reconceptualising of leadership and suggesting a gradual process of distributed leadership implementation in South African schools.

Leading through distribution and encouraging teacher leadership

Traditionally, research on education leadership has been premised on a singular view of leadership and upon individual impetus (Muijs and Harris, 2003). Furthermore, in the South African context and especially during the apartheid era, education leadership was often equated with headship and understood in relation to formal position, status and authority (Grant, 2006). School principals were often cast as the only leaders but, while they were accountable to the Department of Education (DoE) because of their formal position in schools, this did not necessarily make them good leaders and neither did it give them the monopoly in issues of leadership. The style of leadership adopted was often autocratic in nature and involved a process of 'delegation' where tasks and directives were passed down a managerial structure by a head to 'subordinates' without consultation or negotiation. In contrast to this view of leadership, and for the purpose of this article, we argue that the potential of leadership is restricted if it is sought only from one individual at the apex of a hierarchy and instead believe that leadership potential exists widely within an organisation and emerges from different individuals and groups of people at different times as they go about their work. We align

ourselves with Harris and Muijs (2005) who suggest that leadership is more to do with the relationships and connections among individuals within a school than the position itself. Similarly Gunter, theorising from a critical perspective, argues further that:

education leadership is concerned with productive social and socialising relationships where the approach is not so much about controlling relationships through team processes but more about how the agent is connected with others in their own and others' learning. Hence it is inclusive of all, and integrated with teaching and learning (2005, 6).

In attempting to describe this connectivity, Gronn (2000) proposes an alternate view of leadership. He suggests that orthodox ways of thinking about leadership be replaced with the view that leadership is something that takes on a distributed form. Distributed leadership allows for the flow of influence in organisations and is separate from an automatic connection of leadership with headship. For Gunter (2005) it raises questions about the location and exercise of power and examines what is distributed; are only technical tasks distributed or is authority, responsibility and legitimacy also distributed? Bennett, Harvey, Wise and Woods (2003) concede that there is little agreement about the meaning of the term 'distributed leadership'. They suggest that it is 'a way of thinking about leadership' and describe distributed leadership as "not something done by an individual to others" (2003, 3). They argue that leadership is 'fluid' in comparison to traditional notions of leadership that delineate the leader from the follower. Rather distributed leadership can be described as "an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise" (Gronn, 2000, 324). It is based on trust (Lieberman, Saxl and Miles, 1988; Grant, 2006) and requires 'letting go' by senior staff rather than just delegating tasks.

A useful characterisation of distributed leadership is offered by Gunter (2005). She suggests that distributed leadership is currently, in research, being characterised variously as authorised, dispersed and democratic (ibid, 51). Firstly, *authorised* distributed leadership is where work is distributed from the principal to others and is usually accepted because it is regarded as legitimate within the hierarchical system of relations and because it gives status to the person who takes on the work. This type of leadership can also be termed 'delegated leadership' and is evident where there are "teams, informal work groups, committees, and so on, operating within a hierarchical organisation" (Woods, 2004, 6). Teachers often accept the delegated work, either in the interests of the school or for their own empowerment. However, power remains at the organisational level and teacher leadership is dependent on those who hold formal leadership positions. Secondly, *dispersed* distributed leadership refers to a process where much of the workings of an organisation take place without the formal working of a hierarchy. It is a more autonomous, bottom-up and emergent and is accepted because of the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of organisational members who, either individually or in autonomous work groups, develop the work (Gunter, 2005). This type of leadership centres on spontaneity and intuitive working relations (Gronn, 2003) and, as Gunter explains, "while formal structures exist with role incumbents and job descriptions, the reality of practice means that people may work together in ways that work best" (2005, 54). Through sharing the leadership work more widely and redefining roles, the power relations in the school are shifted away from the formal leaders in the accomplishment of the organisational goals. Thirdly, *democratic* distributed leadership is similar to dispersed distributed leadership in that both have the potential for concertive action (Gunter, 2005, 56) and both have an emergent character where initiative circulates widely

(Woods, 2004). However, it is different in that it does not assume political neutrality, but instead engages critically with organisational values and goals (Woods, 2004, 7) and raises questions of inclusion and exclusion which include “how meaning is developed, how experiences are understood and how we work for change” (Gunter, 2005, 57). In other words democratic distributed leaders transform not only individual understandings of self and others, but that they “lay the groundwork for challenging social inequities and inequalities” (Shields, 2006, 77).

Implicit within the framework of distributed leadership theory, are the leadership practices of teachers. The concept of teacher leadership is, however, understood and defined differently by many different writers internationally. But, as Harris and Lambert emphasise, the definitions tend to have one point in common which is that “teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed” (2003, 44). They further explain that teacher leadership has as its core “a focus on improving learning and is a model of leadership premised on the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, 43).

South Africa’s colonial and apartheid history has led to a society suffering the consequences of inequality based on issues of race, class and patriarchal power relations. At the level of the institution within this society, hierarchical and bureaucratic management structures remain the norm in many schools. Given this scenario, teacher leadership, at the level of the individual, is unlikely to emerge unless there is a shift in the understanding of leadership at the organisational level. We argue that a form of distributed leadership is required at the level of the school where principals are willing to relinquish their power to others and where fixed leader-follower dualisms are abandoned” so that South African schools are no longer “led by a lone figure at the top of the hierarchy” (Grant, 2006, 514). The leadership that we are suggesting rests on the immediate expertise of teachers rather than seniority or position and is more likely to be exercised through ad hoc, rather than formally constituted groups (Bennett *et al.*, 2003, 5). So to enable teachers to become leaders, SMT members have to develop “the right balance of confidence and humility to distribute leadership wisely where strengths in colleagues are evident” (Grant, 2006, 524).

Research Design

Aim and research questions

The main aim of the study was to explore notions of distributed leadership within two, fairly similar schools and to determine how the leadership of the school’s management team either promoted or posed a barrier to the development of teacher leadership. The following broad research question guided the research, “To what extent did the SMT distribute leadership to allow for teachers to emerge as leaders and participate in school-level decision-making in the context of their schools?”

Context of the study

Two previously disadvantaged urban KZN primary schools were chosen for the study. Two schools were chosen to increase the size of the data set. At the time of the study School A had a pupil enrolment figure of 922 and a staff of 23 permanent educators and six governing body employed educators. The management team included the principal, a deputy principal and

three heads of department. The school had one state paid administration clerk and two additional administrative clerks who were employed by the school governing body. The parent community was mainly middle to lower income earners. School B had 578 pupils and a staff of 17 state paid permanent educators and two SGB employed educators. The management team included the principal, deputy principal, and three heads of department. The school had one state employed administration clerk. Both schools, despite the hardships they faced, remained focused on their central tasks of teaching, learning and management and achieved this with a sense of confidence, responsibility, purpose and commitment. Furthermore, both schools had organisational cultures that supported a work ethic and expected achievement which classified them as 'Schools that work' (Christie, Butler and Potterton, 2007, 5).

Methodology

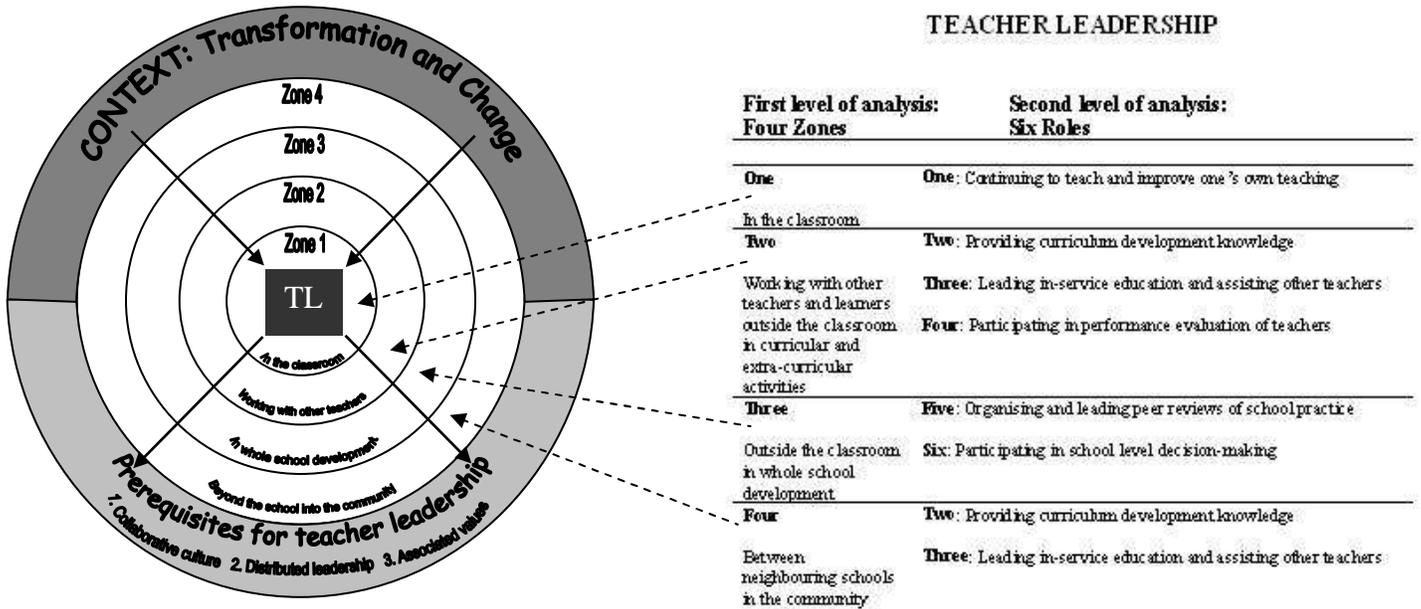
The research was designed as a small scale qualitative study which drew on questionnaire and interview data from the two schools. Purposive sampling was used to select the two schools. The schools were chosen primarily because they were 'schools that worked'; they were functioning where their neighbouring schools were not. We made the assumption that, by choosing 'schools that worked', it was more likely that teacher leadership might be evident in the schools which would enable us to address our research question. The two schools were also chosen through convenience sampling because of their accessibility to the researcher. At each of the two schools, the participating SMT members in the study were the principal, deputy principal and a head of department, all of whom were formal leaders appointed to management positions by the provincial Department of Education. There was no specific criterion for selecting the one head of department from each school. The heads of department were informed that only one of them from each school was required to participate in the study. They decided amongst themselves who would participate, and informed us accordingly. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with each of the three SMT members at School A and School B.

Post level one teachers from each school were also invited to participate in the study and were asked to complete a survey questionnaire. Out of 30 questionnaires handed out across the two schools, 15 were completed and returned. We took the non-return of the questionnaires to mean that those educators who did not complete the questionnaire did not wish to participate in the study. Five teachers from each school were then invited to participate in a focus group interview at each school. Teachers who completed the questionnaires decided amongst themselves who would participate in the interview. We aimed, through our combination of different data collection methods, to gain a rich picture of the different perceptions on teacher leadership from different perspectives in order to answer our research question. Our study therefore did not intend to make generalisations, but instead aimed to examine the unique context of each school and the role of the SMT in either mediating or hindering the development of teacher leadership. Furthermore we chose not to design our research within a framework of race and gender and this could be seen by some readers as a limitation of the study.

Data analysis

Once the interviews were transcribed, we used the inductive method to analyse the questionnaire and interview data. Using a grounded theory process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), we allowed the data to 'speak' and concepts and themes were generated through the process of coding. The concepts and themes developed were then further categorised using Grant's

(forthcoming) model (hereafter referred to as *the model*) of ‘zones’ and roles’ of teacher leadership as illustrated in Figure 1 below.



Discussion

The first finding of interest from our study was that there was no common understanding of the concept of teacher leadership among participants. The term was understood in a range of different ways and it is beyond the scope of this article to explore these different understandings. However, what emerged from the questionnaire data was that the majority of teachers had a narrow understanding of teacher leadership as being restricted to leadership in the classroom; teacher leadership within ‘Zone 1’ of the model. Within this zone of the classroom, teachers were leading in an effort to continually improve their own teaching (*Role 1*). The next section explores teacher leadership beyond the confines of the classroom walls and does this using Zones 2, 3 and 4 of the model in order to understand ‘where’ and ‘how’ teacher leadership was further happening.

A change in school leadership: towards more participation

From the interviews with teachers it emerged that opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles beyond their core function of classroom teaching, i.e. beyond ‘Zone 1’ of the model, had recently surfaced in the schools. A teacher in School B explained how opportunities to lead were greater than they were in the past, for example: “We’re involved in policy making now. It wasn’t like that all the time. Now there’s a sense of ownership. We are all role players; the teacher has a lot to gain. Things have changed from the past where unilateral decisions were made”. Examples of teachers working within ‘Zone 2’ of the model, leading other teachers outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities, emerged from the data. During the focus group interviews, examples arose in teachers’ stories about their opportunities and

experiences in leading teaching and learning related activities. These included level one teachers being curriculum leaders, grade heads, leaders of various committees, and are examples of the curriculum development knowledge role (*Role 2*) as well as the role of leading in-service education and assisting other teachers (*Role 3*). For example, a participant from School A spoke of her mentoring role: “I mentor and advise new teachers and young student teachers, not officially, but casually, but we teachers help each other and learn from each other”. Other examples included teachers working collaboratively to develop new curriculum methods and planning jointly (*Role 2*) as well as preparing for peer observation (*Role 4*). These represent good examples of teacher leadership within ‘Zone 2’ and fit into the typology of ‘extended professional’ (Hoyle, 1980; Broadfoot and Osborne, 1988), where the teacher operates as an extended professional, whose thinking and practice is not narrow and restricted to the classroom. A few examples of opportunities for teacher leadership in both schools were particularly specific to the South African school context and fitted within ‘Zone 4’ of the model where teachers lead beyond the school into the community. An example from the data in this study was teachers’ involvement and leadership within the HIV/AIDS ‘Love Life campaign’, an annual event held by external organisers to raise awareness of the prevention of suicide and drug abuse amongst school children and the community.

The data also pointed to opportunities created by the SMT for teachers to take on leadership roles within ‘Zone 3’ of the school, i.e. within a whole school development setting. At School B the following was an example of a teacher leadership opportunity created: “we’ve given teachers a chance every Monday to address the school at assembly”. Some of the teachers in the focus group made reference to their involvement and decision-making (*Role 6*) in developing school policy on aspects relating to homework, assembly, discipline, pupil admissions and sporting codes. School policy development is a good example of a leadership function. Teachers also spoke of their involvement representing the staff at school governing body meetings and convening and chairing sub-committee meetings, both of these formal leadership functions. Other examples included preparing learners for concerts and debutante balls in aid of fund raising for the school as well as organising feeding schemes for pupils. These teacher functions were required on an annual basis as part of the school tradition or were regular administration functions within the school year plan. As such they were more management than leadership oriented. To extend our understanding further we turn now to try to understand the level of teacher leadership within ‘Zone 3’ in particular and how and on whose authority the leadership emerged. In other words we want to understand the SMTs’ role in either supporting or blocking the development of teacher leadership in the two schools.

Teacher leadership: restricted involvement within a discourse of delegation

The SMT members in this study discussed teacher leadership mainly within a discourse of delegation where delegation, as Jackson (2003) explains, involves a manifestation of power relations and involves the handing down of tasks within a managerial structure. For example, in this study one participant from School A explained: “So you would basically use them and their expertise and appoint them as leaders so they will co-ordinate and take over this activity”. As another SMT member from School B described: “I think we as managers are crying out for help so coming from the managers there aren’t any barriers, we need the assistance of everybody. The school is a huge institution to run”. One respondent’s perceptions of teacher leadership revealed the kind of reasoning behind delegating tasks in School B, for example: “In a school there’s so much, people have to multi-task all the time, and it’s difficult for the management

staff to always carry out all the responsibilities assigned to us. You can do it but to do it effectively I feel it's good to have the assistance of educators". These quotations attest to the weight of the management responsibility on the shoulders of these SMT members – their desperation was almost tangible and one can understand their relief at being able to hand down some administrative and management tasks to teachers. Relying on the SMTs' perceptions alone, we might be tempted to label this leadership type as 'authorised distributed leadership' (Gunter, 2005), where tasks are distributed from the principal or the SMT to others in a hierarchical system of relations but within which opportunity, space and support are provided for teachers to lead. However, a closer look at the teacher data gives us a very different picture.

The teachers in the study were particularly vocal about the SMTs' understanding of teacher leadership which one teacher from School A described as follows: "You are given extra duties by the management above your normal teaching". Another teacher from School B bemoaned the additional responsibility: "extra work and duties just get palmed on you". Gunter (2005, 55) warns of the additive nature of distributed leadership whereby inviting teachers to participate in areas that they were not involved in before actually leads to the creation of more work for them. Many of the teachers felt that the extra management duties they were forced to take on was an unfair practice as management was merely passing down functions within their own job descriptions to teachers. The following words from a School B teacher touches the core of the argument we are attempting to make in this article: "Sometimes you feel its management's job just passed onto you. I won't consider that as leadership. It is just passing the buck".

These strong views of the teachers point to a crucial feature of leadership which, we argue, is that it cannot be imposed or assumed but instead needs to be bestowed by those who are to be led (Jackson, 2003). It involves a dynamic and reciprocal relationship within a 'dialogic space' (Rule, 2004; Grant and Jugmohan, 2008) of equality, non-hierarchy, learning and empowerment. These dialogic spaces, Rule argues, must "provide a safe environment, encourage openness and trust, and facilitate critical engagement within and among participants, and between participants and their worlds" (2004, 326). In contrast, the two schools in this study operated "with hierarchy, rules and management protocols that "relied on "bureaucratic linkages to connect people to work by forcing them to respond as subordinates" (Sergiovanni, 2001, 132). The leadership at play was not authorised distributed leadership because, as Bennett *et al.* emphasise, "distributed leadership is not something done by an individual to others; rather it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise" (2003, 3). The understanding of teacher leadership as unwanted tasks being 'given' to a person by someone in a position of authority contradicts the essential meaning and spirit of teacher leadership which is that it has an emergent property. For Wasley (1991), the incentives for teachers to participate in teacher leadership arise out of a sense of personal commitment to provide the best education for students and also the motivation from successes experienced in terms of teachers and students tasks that are well accomplished. In line with this thinking, we argue that teacher leadership, while it may have existed to a limited extent among individual teachers in their classrooms ('Zone 1'), working with other teachers ('Zone 2') and, to a lesser extent, with teachers working in the community ('Zone 4'), did not really exist at a whole school level ('Zone 3') because of the lack of authentic distributed leadership in the two schools in this study. The power in the organisation was firmly located at the organisational level and teacher leadership was dependent on the SMT who, in these two schools, prevented it from emerging.

Instead teachers were delegated tasks that were mainly administrative and fairly repetitive in nature or were the less important aspects of school life. Examples included activities like fund raising, a braai evening, the school dance, and so on. In reality, the more important decisions that required leadership, curriculum issues for example, were taken by the SMT: "As management we need to make certain decisions ourselves and it should be implemented by educators". Here it appears that distributing leadership was seen as too much of a risk for these SMT members who felt the sole weight of accountability for the leadership of their schools. But not only did the SMTs decide which functions and tasks teachers could manage but they also determined which teachers could participate and which were excluded. It is to this point that we now turn.

The politics of teacher leadership and the boundaries of participation: who cracks the nod?

Members of the SMTs in this study used their formal positions to delegate management and administrative tasks to people they saw fit for the role, while they withheld this from others. This raised issues of access. Within the discourse of delegation, 'appointments' to teacher leadership (or perhaps better named *teacher management*) rested on the criteria of experience, seniority and expertise. The general assumption of the SMT members about the potential for leadership amongst their teachers can be summed up in the following words:

We identify this person is good in this, or has certain skills. We can approach this person to co-ordinate these activities, but not all teachers are leaders. If you give it to someone else, you'll find that teacher is not a leader and can't manage. In certain cases others have developed much more competence than teachers who are lower down, so you harness it. So we distribute leadership all the time. Support will be on a one-to-one basis because the teacher has been identified as a teacher leader who is co-ordinating a program.

This view taken by both SMTs finds expression in the 'professional management approach' (McLennan and Thurlow, 1997) which protects power on the basis of expertise and professional elitism and results in repetitions of patterns of disempowerment. Teachers who had experience and expertise in areas such as curriculum, administration, networking, fundraising and project co-ordination were deemed fit by the SMT to take on these opportunities for leadership and management. In both schools a senior teacher culture existed with senior teachers given preference and favoured over less experienced junior teachers. The data contained many such examples, "utilising educators who have expertise in a particular field", "educators qualified", "teachers with experience and competence to lead". Again, the power in the organisation was firmly located at the organisational level and teacher leadership was dependent on the SMT who, in the two schools, prevented the emergence of junior, less experienced teacher leaders, confirming the inequality and power differentials in the schools as a result of the hierarchical school structure. This senior teacher culture operated as a barrier to the full emergence of teacher leadership in each school by restricting young creative teachers from introducing new initiatives. We now turn to another barrier to teacher leadership at the organisational level of the school, that of a culture of non-collegiality.

Barriers to teacher leadership: Contrived collegiality and the micropolitics of the school

From the questionnaire data it emerged that all 15 teachers in the study described their school culture as being collegial with the staff engaging in teamwork and participating in staff meetings. However, evidence from the focus group interviews pointed to the contrary, with educators saying that ownership of decisions taken was lacking because the SMT caucused beforehand and took unilateral decisions on issues. At staff meetings the SMT made it appear as though democratic, participatory decision making processes were being employed, but this was not so in reality, as the example quotation from School A illustrates:

Not everything is by full consensus, most often the idea has already been formulated; decisions already made by the SMT, we are coerced into accepting it. The strategies they use, tactics are used to get us to take ownership- but it is not so. Ultimately, if it's for the benefit of the children, we agree and accept the idea.

Teachers were familiar with and used the rhetoric of collegiality in describing their school culture. However, in practice, a culture of authentic collegiality did not exist as decision-making processes were not actually participatory and teachers merely agreed to 'go with the flow', citing the benefits to learners and learning as their reason for complying. From a micropolitical perspective, the culture in each of the two schools could be described as 'contrived collegiality' (Hargreaves, 1992). To the questions, "who guides and who controls collegiality?" (ibid, 82), the data clearly pointed to SMT members who controlled the culture of the school giving teachers limited control and superficial involvement in decision-making. Using the micropolitical perspective, collegiality in the two schools was understood by the SMT as "a way of co-opting teachers to fulfilling administrative purposes and the implementation of external mandates" (Hargreaves, 1992, 83). In this study, the external mandates were in the form of policy requirements and directives from DOE, of which one SMT member from School A had this to say:

For example, there cannot be participation with regards to that kind of policy that has been handed from the department because you are merely informing them what has been brought down via policy. So in that case you may find your leadership may tend to be more autocratic type where you are basically informing.

This quotation points to the possibility that the SMTs viewed their role as conduits for the DOE, mirroring how the policy was passed on to them. They understood their role legitimately being to pass department directives down the chain of command to their teachers without need for any critique of the directive. This was evidence of a lack of critical education leadership on the part of the SMT members to see a need to engage with, reflect on, discuss and critique department directives, before they were implemented. Thus the contrived nature of teacher participation in school decision-making processes highlighted the mere rhetoric of collegiality, perhaps because, as Gunter (2005, 58) suggests, it was too risky in practice. Furthermore, all six SMT members' accounts of how they ran staff meetings revealed that agendas were drawn up by the SMT and circulated to staff without prior consultation. The following excerpt illustrates the hierarchical manner in which staff meetings were planned and conducted and the limited time allocated for teacher agency and leadership: "We also, at our staff meetings have a section under general where educators feel free to report back on matters concerning the school, matters that need attention, matters that the SMT need to record, etcetera". What is striking is the positioning on the agenda for teacher input and the time and space allocated for teachers to

raise and discuss important issues. Again we see that the power was firmly located at the organisational level and teacher leadership was dependent on the SMT who paid lip-service to teacher participation and dialogue in decision-making, indicating a 'lack of valuing' of teacher voice and authentic dialogic space in the school.

Conclusion

In this article we explored to what extent the SMTs in two KZN primary schools distributed leadership to allow for the post level one teachers to emerge as leaders and participate in school-level decision-making in the context of their schools. The study found that both schools were hierarchically structured which worked against a culture of collegiality. Although the SMTs used the rhetoric of collegiality, the schools displayed a culture of 'contrived collegiality'. Teacher leadership, where it existed, was restricted to the classroom and to teachers working with other teachers to improve their teaching and learning. A lack of distributed leadership in the schools prevented authentic teacher leadership from emerging at a whole school level. Instead of 'teacher leadership', 'teacher management' was evident where SMTs delegated administrative and management tasks to senior teachers in an ethos of compliance. The SMT members themselves, working from a traditional view of leadership, were the main barriers to authentic teacher leadership emerging in their schools.

So how can we move towards more distributed forms of leadership in schools? In attempting to answer this question we argue in the context of South African schools for the radical reconceptualising of leadership and for debates about critical education leadership (Gunter, 2005). However, we need to heed the warning that developing a culture of distributed leadership and teacher leadership in schools must be seen as an evolutionary process (Grant, 2006). In our fledgling democracy our first step must be to try to move schools away autocratic forms of leadership and an understanding of leadership as control towards a more distributed form of leadership. But perhaps the most we can aim for, in the first instance, is an authorised form of distributed leadership where tasks are distributed from the SMT to others in a hierarchical system of relations but where leadership is allowed to emerge from teachers who are interested in and empowered to take the lead and are supported and developed in the process. Once an authorised form of distributed leadership is in place in a school, then a move can be initiated towards more dispersed forms of distributed leadership where the workings of the hierarchy are gradually removed as a more collective and shared process of leadership is adopted. And finally, only once this form of leadership is solidly in place, can one move to a democratic form of distributed leadership and begin to engage critically with the values, goals and mission of the school and ask questions which begin to challenge the status quo and raise issues of social inclusion and exclusion. But how to start is complex and we leave the reader with two paradoxes on which to ponder. The first paradox is that a 'redesign' of schools requires distributed leadership as the engine and capacity for change; and the second paradox is that the development in schools of leadership which is truly distributed requires 'strong headteacher leadership' (Jackson, 2003, xiv).

References

Astin A and Astin H 2000. *Leadership reconsidered, engaging higher education in social change*. Available at www.wkkf.org/Pubs/CCT/Leadership/ Pub 3368.PDF

Bennett N Harvey JA Wise C and Woods PA 2003 *Distributed leadership: a desk study*. Available at www.ncsl.org.uk/ literature reviews

Broadfoot P and Osborne M with Gilly M and Paillet A 1988. What professional responsibility means to teachers: national contexts and classroom constants. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 9(3), 265 - 287.

Christie P Butler D and Potterton M 2007. *Report of the Ministerial Committee: Schools that work*. 13 October 2007.

National Department of Education 1996. *Changing Management to Manage Change in Education*. Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Glaser BG and Strauss AL 1967. The Discovery of Grounded Theory, in *Strategies for Qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Grant C 2005. Teacher leadership, gendered responses and interpretations. *Agenda*, 65, 44 – 57.

Grant C 2006. Teacher leadership, some South African voices. *Education management, administration and leadership*, 34 (4), 511 – 532.

Grant C (forthcoming). 'We did not put our pieces together': Exploring a professional development initiative through a distributed leadership lens. Accepted for publication in *Journal of Education*.

Grant C and Jugmohan P 2008. 'In this culture there is no such talk', monologic spaces, paralysed leadership and HIV/AIDS. *South African Journal of Education Leadership and Management*, 1(1), 3 – 16.

Gronn P 2000. Distributed properties: a new architecture for leadership. *Educational Management and Administration*, 28(3), 317-81.

Gronn P 2003. *The new work of educational leaders: changing leadership practice in the era of school reform*. London: Paul Chapman.

Gunter HM 2005. *Leading teachers*. London: Continuum.

Hargreaves A 1992. Contrived collegiality, the micropolitics of teacher collaboration. In Bennett N, Crawford M and Riches C (Eds.), *Managing change in education: individual and organizational perspectives*. London: Paul Chapman. 80 – 94.

Harris A 2004. Distributed Leadership and School Improvement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 32 (1), 11-24.

Harris A and Lambert L 2003. *Building leadership capacity for school improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Harris A and Muijs D 2005. *Improving schools through teacher leadership*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Hoyle E 1980. Professionalization and deprofessionalization in education. In Hoyle E and Megarry H (Eds.), *World yearbook of education 1980: professional development of teachers*, London: Kogan. 42 – 54.

Jackson D 2003. Forward. In Harris A and Lambert L, *Building leadership capacity for school improvement*. Buckingham: Open University Press. x – xxviii.

Khumalo JC 2008. *Teachers' perceptions and experiences of teacher leadership: a survey in the Umlazi District, KwaZulu-Natal*. Unpublished Master of Education thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Kotter J 1990. *A force for change, how leadership differs from management*. New York: Free Press.

Lieberman, A., Saxl, E. and Miles, M. 1988. 'Teacher leadership: ideology and practice' in A. Lieberman (Ed.), *Building a professional culture in schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

McLennan A and Thurlow M 1997. The Context of Educational Management in South Africa. In Thurlow M, Bush T and Coleman M (Eds.), *Leadership and Strategic Management in South African Schools*. London: The Commonwealth Secretariat. 1 – 19.

Moloi KC 2002. *The School as a Learning Organisation: Reconceptualising School Practices in South Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Mosage M J and van der Westhuizen P 1997. Teacher Access to Decision Making in Schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 17 (4), 196-201.

Muijs D and Harris A 2003. Teacher Leadership-Improvement through Empowerment? An Overview of the Literature. *Educational Management & Administration* 31(4), 437-48.

Ntuzela MA 2008. *The role of the School Management Team in developing teacher leadership: case studies of two public primary schools on the lower South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal*. Unpublished Master of Education thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Rajagopaul SM 2007. *An investigation into the factors that help or hinder teacher leadership, case studies of three urban primary schools in the Pietermaritzburg region*. Unpublished Master of Education thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Republic of South Africa 1996. *South African Schools' Act*. (Act No. 84 of 1996, Government Gazette No. 17579, 15 November 1996).

Republic of South Africa 2000. *Norms and Standards for Educators*. (No. 20844, 4 February 2000).

Rule P 2004. Dialogic spaces, adult education projects and social engagement. *International journal of lifelong learning*, 23(4), 319-334.

Sergiovanni TJ 2001. *The School Management Teamship: A Reflective Practice Perspective*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Singh HD 2007. *To what extent does the School Management Team promote or hinder the development of teacher leadership? Case studies of two public primary schools in the northern suburbs of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal*. Unpublished Master of Education thesis. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Shields C 2006. Creating spaces for value-based conversations: the role of school leaders in the 21st century. *International studies in educational administration*, 34, 62 - 81.

Wasley PA 1991. *Teachers who lead: the rhetoric of reform and the realities of practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Woods PA 2004. Democratic leadership: drawing distinctions with distributed leadership. In *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 7(1), 3 – 26.

To contact the authors:

Callie Grant and Hitashi Singh
Faculty of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Private Bag X01
Scottsville
3209
South Africa
Ph: 033-2606185
Email: grantc@ukzn.ac.za