

Distributed Leadership Practices and Applications in Education Management: A Current Architecture for Educational Leadership, A theoretical Overview

GN Shava¹, P Dube², A. Maradze³, C. M. Ncube⁴

^{1,2}National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

^{3,4}Lupane State University, Lupane, Zimbabwe

Abstract: Distributed leadership has become one of the most current architecture in education management. A review of literature reveals broadness in the manor and potential it has brought about in school improvement. While the concept of distributed leadership is regarded to be the most favoured normative model of education management, the understanding of its practices in education leadership discourse is still broad and contested. Distributed leadership entered the leadership and organisational theory discourse and clearly appealed to various scholars, policy makers and administrators and practitioners as a key leadership strategy to frame and promote their operations. Over the past years, distributed leadership has framed theoretical, empirical, and development work for education leadership. Despite frequently expressed reservations concerning its fundamental theoretical weakness, distributed leadership has grown to become the preferred leadership concept and has acquired an axiomatic status. The authors take a contemporary look at distributed leadership in practice by examining literature on the existing knowledge, theories and concepts focusing on distributed leadership in the education landscape. The authors draw upon a wide range of research literature to explore the available empirical evidence about distributed leadership and organisational outcomes. The authors address some common misconceptions that are associated with the concept of distributed leadership, how it can benefit the management of education institutions to improve the quality of teaching and learning and highlights future developments of distributed leadership. The authors argue that the distributed perspective in school leadership offer a new and important theoretical lens through which leadership practice can be reconfigured and reconceptualised. Hopefully, this article serves as a useful contribution to the on-going research and development work on school leadership to enhance the quality of teaching and learning from a distributed perspective.

Key words: Distributed leadership, education leadership, management, perspective, quality education, school improvement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, there has been mounting evidence that top-down, micro managed educational change models have failed to achieve quality teaching and learning. Consequently, alternative models of leadership have emerged under the rubric of Distributed Leadership (DL) as a way to harness the energy, motivation and enthusiasm of teachers to sustain innovation and improvement in schools. Harris and

Spillane (2008); Harris (2012); and Groom (2008) observed that the prominence of DL can be attributed to contemporary reforms in the public service that demands greater joined up or network regime of governance. The concept of DL in education management is considered to be the most favoured normative model of school leadership and has gained much attention. Shava and Tlou (2018) tell us that the concept of DL in the education landscape has gone from strength to strength and has made substantial inroads into educational leadership practices. Since the highly influential seminal account by Spillane (2006) which has been regarded as the cornerstone of contemporary DL theory, new perspectives, additional accounts and contemporary interpretations of DL continue to enrich the growing knowledge base (Klar, Huggins, Hammonds & Buskey, 2016; Harris, 2005; Yueu, Chen & Ng, 2015). While the concept of DL continues to be considered the most normative model of leadership, the understanding of DL in educational leadership discourse is broad and to a greater extent contested (Bush & Crawford, 2012). A review of leadership literature reveals several problems in an attempt to better explain or explicate the DL construct. In particular, there has been lack of clarity and consistency in the definition of the concept of DL. Lumby (2013) argues that despite the huge growth in the literature on DL in recent years, the concept lacks an agreed definition, hence, there is no credible basis for applying DL. However, Lumby (2013) pessimistically concluded that the impact and concept of DL remains unquestionable. The Mayrowetz (2008) notes that the term DL has been used interchangeably with shared leadership, delegated leadership and democratic leadership even though these other constructs are not synonymous to the distributed perspective of leadership that Spillane (2006) offers. Literature has given a few clearer operational definitions of DL (Bennett, Wise, Woods & Harvey, 2003). Some gaps identified by an earlier literature review of DL and empirically define its application (Taina, Risku & Collin, 2016) are bold assertions, particularly as important parts of the contemporary literature. This lack of clarity in the definition of DL has contributed to the elasticity that education leadership researchers bestow on the term leadership. Some researchers have asserted that the absence of a neat and consistent definition of DL remains a limitation, although, in reality, this has not hindered empirical

investigations or deterred continuing interest in the practical application of DL. In this article, we seek to clarify the misconceptions associated with DL and point out the fundamental misunderstandings that still prevail.

II. DL PRACTICES, POSSIBILITIES AND EVIDENCE

The concept of DL has received great attention in educational research (Bolden, 2011; Crawford, 2012) and according to Harris and Spillane (2008) this attention reflects the current changes in leadership practices in schools. As already alluded to above, the concept of DL lacks clear definitions. Definitions of DL include conceptual, operational, measurement and contextual issues surrounding the idea. Without questioning, DL is a term that is widely known and used to refer to leadership that is shared and distributed between and across organizational members (Harris, 2013a).

Copland (2003, p. 376) defined DL is defined as:

“a set of functions or qualities shared across a much broader segment of the school community that encompasses administrators, teachers and other professionals and community members both internal and external to the school. Such an approach imposes the need for school communities to create and sustain broadly distributed leadership systems, processes and capacities”

Some school leadership researchers have attempted to make DL more understandable by providing aspects of its principles. Harris (2013a) identified a list of facets or common principles of DL and these include:

- Is a broad based leadership;
- Requires multiple levels of involvement in decision making;
- Focuses primarily on improving classroom practice or instruction;
- Encompasses both formal and informal leaders;
- Links vertical and lateral leadership structures;
- Extends to students and encourage student voice;
- Is flexible and versatile (non-permanent groupings);
- Is fluid and interchangeable; and
- Is ultimately concerned with improving leadership practice.

While such attempts are laudable, DL remains elusive as a substantive conceptual construct. In this article, we argue that DL is a theory which advocates for schools to decentralise their leadership and open up the possibility for a more collective form of leadership. This means leadership in the school set up should be stretched over a number of individuals and is accomplished through the daily interactions of multiple leaders who have expertise. Likewise, Gronn (2002) argue for a distributed perspective on leadership that goes beyond the superiority of the leader and the dependency of the followers.

Although DL has become part of the school leadership discourse, its usages vary. Research in educational leadership has repeatedly shown that carefully constructed and

disciplined professional distribution of leadership and collaboration can make a positive difference to organizational performance and outcomes (Harris, 2009). Another clear message from international research evidence is that DL, especial in education management, is a key driver in securing and sustaining improved outcomes (Hall, 2013). The empirical research findings point in the direction and reinforce that DL or collaborative leadership or leadership beyond the principal has a powerful influence on instructional improvement and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2009). Spillane and Coldren (2011) point out that even though factors beyond the school walls such as student socio-economic status do influence student achievement, school leadership can leverage such as instruction. In this article, we argue that carefully constructed distributed leadership and disciplined professional collaboration can make a positive difference to organizational performance and especially to quality learning outcomes.

In teaching and learning environment, DL should be characterized by high levels of trust, inter-dependence, reciprocal, accountability, and shared purpose as highlighted by Harris (2008). Hallinger and Heck (2009) tell us that the expansion of leadership roles in schools beyond those in formal leadership or administration posts represent one of the most influential ideas to emerge in the field of educational leadership in the past decade. Harris (2009) argue that in England and other developed countries, a recent study of school transformation has shown that DL is a key component of successes and highlights how this was associated with higher performance and gains in achievement. Contemporary evidence in education achievement tends to support a positive relationship between distributed leadership, organizational improvement and student achievement. (Harris, 2009; Harris, 2008; Leithwood & Mascallm, 2008). These studies have underlined and reinforced the importance of DL as a potential contributor to positive organisational change and improvement. Strong school principals with exceptional vision and action should seek to relinquish school organisational structures and associated leadership practices that are not fit for a purpose and adopt DL which addresses the need of twenty-first century schooling.

However, Leithwood et., al (2009) suggest shared leadership for most people is simply counterintuitive: Leadership is obviously and “manifestly an individual” trait and activity (Leithwood et., al 2009, p.251). They illustrate this paradox through reference to leaders like Gandhi and Luther King, Jr proposing that, such leaders relied on the support of a team of other effective leaders. In Africa, we also have leaders like Nelson Mandela and Julius Nyerere who depended on the support of others for their effective leadership. A deeply entrenched tendency to underestimate the contribution of more than a few key figures stems from thousands of years of cultural conditioning and as such, remains incredibly difficult to change even if the evidence points elsewhere. DL therefore offers an accurate account of how effective leadership actually

occurs or simply responds to a current demand for the effectiveness, efficiency and the demand within society for a greater sense of equity and purpose.

III. DL ORIGINS AND MOTIVATIONS A RETROSPECTIVE

Oduro (2004; p4) remarks that DL dates back as far as 250 BC, making it “one of the most ancient leadership notions recommended for fulfilling organisational goal through people”. According to Spillane (2009), DL originated with the work of anthropologist Edwin Hutchins in the 1990s in his studies of navigation on a naval aircraft carrier. Harris (2009) proposed that the idea of DL can be traced as far as the mid-20s and possibly earlier. However, Gronn (2000, p.324) suggests that the idea of DL is only mentioned in a smattering of articles during the 1980s. Gronn (2006) contends that DL emerged in 2005. Looking into literature, there is some evidence that the concept of DL might have indeed originated earlier than 2005. Some of the works that supports early origins of DL include: Gibb’s 1954 work on the distribution of power and influence Etzion’s 1965 work on dual leadership, the works of Katz and Kahn (1966) on sharing leadership, Bass’s 1985 work on the diffusion of leadership functions within groups and Mary Parker Follett’s 2003 work on reciprocal influence. All these authors and several others cited by Leithwood, Mascall, and Strauss (2009a) map out a rich and diverse array of the origin, theory and research upon which subsequent work on DL was built. Despite this historical background on the origins of DL, however, it was not until recently that conditions were finally right for the acceptance and adoption of this seemingly radical departure from the traditional approaches of leadership as something imparted to followers by a leader from above (Gronn 2000). Thus despite the early interest in concept of DL, idea of DL went dormant until “its resurrection” in recent years.

DL was conceived as a theoretical and analytical framework for studying school leadership, one that would explicitly focus attention on how leadership was enacted in schools and as an activity stretched across the social and situational context (Hall, 2013). In tracking the actual theoretical framework of DL, a number of key concepts are commonly highlighted. For example, Bolden (2011) identified distributed cognition and activity theory as the conceptual foundations of his account of DL. Gronn (2002) similarly recognizes distributed cognition and activity theory as key concepts within DL. Gronn (2006) argued that DL emerged from sociological, cognitive, psychological, and anthropological theories, most importantly distributed cognition and activity theory and influenced by communities of practice. With regards to activity theory, Gronn (2000) draws particularly on the work of Engeström (1999) who in turn builds on the works of Vygotsky (1978) which offers a framework for analysing situated activity as the product of reciprocal and mediated interactions between instruments, subjects, objects, rules, community and division of labour. Further, Edwin Hutchins’s studies of navigation showed that cognitive activity, or knowing what to do, was a

situation process, influenced by other people, tools, and the situation (Spillane, 2006), thus his works led to the conclusion that cognition is socially distributed (Spillane, 2009).

With theoretical foundations in activity theory and distributed cognition, understanding leadership from a distributed perspective means seeing leadership activities as a situated and social process at the intersection of leaders, followers and the situation. While some research on leadership has focused on the role or function of the designated leader, such as instructional leadership or transformational leadership, there has also been a significant shift to understanding leadership as a shared effort by more than one person. DL looks more broadly at various roles that provide forms of leadership throughout the school system, including teacher leadership, democratic leadership, shared leadership, or collaborative leadership. DL draws on these multiple-agent perspectives to describe how actors work to establish the conditions for improving teaching and learning. It is not an activity rather a procedure (Spillane, 2006). DL, therefore, is any activity tied to the core work of the organization that is designed by organizational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, effect or practices of other organizational members. Spillane (2006) tells us that DL sits at the intersection of psychology, sociology, and cognitive science. It is essentially the theory that knowledge and the thinking with that knowledge are stretched across the tools, situation, other people, and context.

DL has now entered the leadership and organisational theory discourse and clearly appealed to various scholars, policy makers, administrators, and practitioners as they have used it to frame, describe, and promote their work (Spillane, 2006). Gronn (2000) offers a number of reasons for this turn of events, including mainly the rise in cross-functional teams, along with speed of delivery and the availability of information and greater job complexity. Harris (2013a) also cites increasing global interdependence and demands for inclusive and diversity as a driving force that highlight the limitations of more individualistic understandings and operations of leadership. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) argue that, the renewed interest in DL grew probably owing to the appetite for accounts of new leadership founded on transformational, instructional and charismatic leadership that dominated scholarly and practitioner literature. We also argue that the leader-centric approach dominated by individual action cannot work well enough and offer a promise of order and higher achievement in our twenty-first century teaching and learning. The one-man control of the school organization is no longer fit for purpose and needs to be revised to adopt a distributed leadership perspective. Uhl-Bein (2006) tells us that DL is not something done by an individual to others or set of individual action through which people contribute to a group or organization, it is a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action.

Wood and Robert (2016) commented that the adoption of DL was a result of organization unsatisfied with traditional leadership approaches which tend to:

- Focus exclusively on people in leadership positions (e.g.) the head teachers;
- Emphasize the traits and characteristics of those people in leadership positions;
- Less often study leadership exercised by people who did not hold traditional leadership positions e.g. teacher leaders;
- Examine leadership with particular organizational contexts as a backdrop (e.g. contingency theory);
- Focus on leader's thinking (cognitive perspective) or how their thinking was influenced by educational organization (institutional theory); and
- Focus on leadership as the only source of ideas for organizational development and improvement of teaching and learning.

Collectively, traditional leadership approaches tended to focus on the role of individuals, contexts, and cognition in leadership practice. Traditional leadership approaches failed to link the core pieces of leadership and examine them in practice and interaction (Spillane, 2006). To develop a more integrated leadership approach, proponents of effective leadership turned to work on distributed cognition, sociocultural activity theory, and micro organizational sociology perspectives (Mayrowetz, 2008) which show how thinking and action emerge through social interaction. Diamond (2015) also tells us that researchers used the distributed metaphor to develop an integrated framework for studying leadership practice that accounted for individuals, cognition and context simultaneously. In doing this, researcher shifted the unit of analysis to leadership activity itself rather than focusing on leaders, their thinking and actions, or the leadership context in isolation. Gronn (2000) argues that DL is seen to have the potential solution to the tendency of leadership thinking to be divided into opposing camps: those that consider it largely the consequences of individual agency (Uhl-Bein, 2006) and those that present it as the systems design and role structures (Bolden, 2011). Wood and Robert (2016) argue that in developing a distributed perspective, we need to build a conceptual framework for researching the practices of leading and managing focused on teaching and learning. They argue that we need a framework that capture the social nature of human practice because it is not what people do that matters, but how they do so together.

IV. DL PRACTICES AND THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS.

Much of the work on education leadership has focused exclusively on the principal and centred around defining the heroics of individuals (Lumby, 2013), however, DL is mostly concerned with the practice of leadership rather than precise leadership roles (Harris, 2014) DL adopts a professional collaboration approach that contributes to building social

capital for improving organizational productivity and organizational improvement. DL puts more weight on the co-dependent interaction and practice rather than individual and autonomous actions related to formal leadership roles and responsibilities (Harris 2014). Gronn (2002) sees DL as the cumulative interaction which give rise to outcomes. Gronn (2002) proposes that DL is:

- Spontaneous collaboration, where groups of individuals with different skills, knowledge and capabilities come together to complete a particular task, project or activity;
- There is intuitive working relations, among individuals, where two or more individuals develop close working relations over time, supporting each other until leadership is manifest in the shared role space encompassed by their relationship;
- There are individual institutional practices, where enduring organizational structures like committees, sub structures, subcommittees and teams are put in place to facilitate collaborations between individuals;
- Support from the principal, which is vital for teacher leaders; and
- There is shared vision, collective responsibility, respect and trust among colleagues, collective learning-oriented work, and a focus on serious organizational goal achievement.

In order to clearly articulate the various practices and roles of individuals in a DL perspective, Leithwood, Day, Summons, and Harris (2006) developed taxonomies which are summarized as follows:

- Plan full alignment, where following consultation, resources and responsibilities are deliberately distributed to those individuals and/or groups best placed to lead a particular function or task;
- Spontaneous alignment, where leadership tasks and functions are distributed in a planned way with tacit and intuitive decisions about who should perform which leadership, considering experience, expertise and competencies. Leadership functions resulting in a fortuitous alignment of functions across leadership sources (Harris, and Spillane 2008);
- Anarchic misalignment, where leaders pursue this own goals independently of one another and there is active rejection on the part of some or many organizational leaders;
- Focusing on the motivation of all members in the organization; and
- Making decisions with other and adopting ideas from members.

Another perspective is provided by Crawford (2012) who summarized the practices and roles as:

- Formal distribution, where leadership is intentionally delegated or devolved among members;

- Pragmatic distribution, where leadership roles and responsibilities are negotiated and decided between different actors;
- Strategic distribution, where new people, with particular skills, knowledge and/or access to resources are brought in to meet a particular leadership need;
- Incremental distribution, where people acquire leadership responsibilities progressively as they gain experience;
- Opportunistic distribution, where people willingly take on additional responsibilities over and above those typically required for their job in a relatively adhoc manner; and
- Cultural distribution, where leadership is naturally assumed by members of an organization/group and shared organically between individuals.

The work by Spillane (2006) also gives us a summary of the roles as:

- Collaborated distribution, where two or more individuals work together in time and place to execute the same leadership routine;
- Collective distribution, where two or more individuals work separately but interdependently to enact a leadership routine; and
- Coordinated distribution, where two or more individuals work in sequence in order to complete a leadership routine.

From all these authorities, there is an indication that a distributed perspective on leadership can co-exist with and be used beneficially to explore hierarchical and top-down leadership approaches. Most of these interpersonal dynamics of DL approaches are more explicitly focused to a school context but still may be applied in other organizational contexts. Each of these frameworks indicate a degree of variation in the extent to which DL is institutionalized by individuals within working practices as part of the overall culture of the organization, and the extent to which this can be instigated deliberately in a coordinated manner. Each of these practices suggest that one or more forms of distributing leadership are effective and desirable and constituting a desirable landscape of effective leadership practices. The work by Gronn (2002); Leithwood et al (2006); and Spillane (2006) give some indication of the potential benefit of a carefully implemented approach to DL as well as the effects of a poorly conceived approach.

In all these approaches to DL, a distributed perspective on leadership involve two aspects, the leader plus aspect and the practice aspects. The leader plus aspect acknowledges and takes account of the work of all individuals who have a hand in leadership and management practice rather than just those in formally designated leadership roles. On the other hand, the practice aspect is concerned with the outcomes of interactions among the leaders, followers and the situation over time.

According to the different authors and theories, together the aspects of DL offer an analytical framework for examining the day to day practices of leadership and management rather than dwelling on leaders and leadership structures, functions and roles. Thus DL, particularly in the educational organization, take leadership activity as the unit of analysis where we find multiple actors, teachers, learners and other stakeholders participating in leadership and managing.

V. LEADERSHIP POSITIONS INSIDE SCHOOLS AS WELL AS PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL.

From a DL perspective, leadership in a school set up is stretched over all people, it is seen as an activity tied to the core work of the organization, activity that is designed by organizational members and activity that is understood by organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, effect and practices (Spillane, 2006). In this regard, Spillane (2006) argue that DL is characterized by stretching over a number of individuals who assume leadership roles on the basis of their expertise and is accomplished through the daily interactions of multiple leaders. The achievement is an outcome of the interaction between the leaders and the followers and their situation. Gronn (2002) argue for a distributed leadership that goes beyond the superiority of the leader and the dependency of the followers. Gronn (2000) emphasize that leadership is better understood as fluid and emergent rather than a fixed phenomenon.

Also, a DL perspective emphasizes the link between leadership and teaching practice. Work taking a distributed perspective has examined relationships between leadership practice and the practice of teaching. Some work shows that instructional systems like shared systematic approach to instruction are critical to leadership for instruction because they offer school leaders opportunities to help teacher learn to improve their instruction (Neumerski, 2014). Thus DL empowers teachers to contribute to school improvement through this empowerment and the spreading of good practices and initiatives by teachers. Recent studies highlight the prevalence of co-performance between school principal and teachers. In a study of 42 principals in one US school district, they reported that they co-performed 47% of their administrative and instructional activities with at least one other person in the school and 37% of the time that other person was a classroom teacher with no formal leadership designation (Spillane, 2013).

Although multiple people are involved in leadership, the distributed perspective highlights interdependencies across seemingly dispersed activities by grounding the analysis in leadership practice. Spillane (2013) identified three types of distributing leadership as:

- Collaborative;
- Collective and
- Coordinated.

Collaborative distribution occurs when two or more people work together in the same time and place on a particular activity (Spillane & Diamond, 2007) for example, facilitating a staff meeting. On the other hand, collective distribution captures how practice is stretched over two or more people who work separately and interdependently like using classroom instruction (Diamond & Spillane 2016). With coordinated distributed leadership, leadership activities are carried out in a particular sequence, that is, a series of steps which provide input to the next step is required (Diamond and Spillane, 2007). The interdependency here is a relay race. Each of these situations captures how leadership is stretched over people but in different ways (see Spillane 2006).

The distributed perspective leadership in the education context has emerged as an important framework for thinking about educational practice. At face value, this bucks tradition because the custom in the field of leadership has been to understand it individually, that is, as something that individuals have and do, rather than collectively. DL in schools is seen as a means for enhancing the effectiveness of, and engagement with, leadership process. However, the most important question in DL is how leadership should be distributed in order to have the most beneficial effect usually measured in terms of student outcomes in schools. While leadership should be shared and or democratic in certain situations, this is not a necessary or sufficient requirement for it to be considered distributed if it does not benefit the learners. Many current manifestations of DL within schools and other organisations suffer from a democratic deficit in that they stop short of advocating the principles of self-governance which is crucial both for organizational effectiveness and a basis of democracy, in favour of a rationale based on measures of efficiency and effectiveness.

Also, it is important to note that in a distributed perspective, the formal school leader plays a critical role in helping to foster productive forms of distributed leadership. School principals occupy the critical space in the teacher leadership equation and centre stage in the work redesign required to bring DL to life in the education system. Taking a distributed perspective is about more than acknowledging that leadership is distributed among members. It goes further to interrogate how it is distributed among members of staff. Some research suggests that leadership practice varies depending on the school type or school size, subject matter (Spillane, 2005), instructional dimension (Spillane, 2006) and the organization position of those who are leading and also their background in leadership. In most cases, teacher leaders, curriculum specialists, school level administrators, and officials at regional and district level all tend to play somewhat distinct roles in caring out leadership activities.

VI. DL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Harris and Spillane (2008, p. 33) clearly tells us that “DL is a way of getting under the skin of leadership practice, of seeing leadership practice differently and illuminating the

possibilities for organizational transformation”. The recent interest in the field of DL has to some degree been fuelled by its association with certain organizational benefits. Distributed leadership implies a fundamental re-conceptualisation of leadership as practice and challenges conventional wisdom about the relationship between formal leadership and organisational performance. There has been much debate, speculation and discussion about its positive effects on organizational performance. While there are a number of factors that influence organizational performance including environmental, teacher empowerment and other factors, it has been argued that the most critical and important factor that influence organizational performance is leadership practices. A number of studies indicate a positive relationship between DL and significant aspects of school performance. Harris (2012) notes that available studies indicate that DL directly and indirectly influence school effectiveness. Leithwood, et al, (2006) argue that it is an undisputed fact that educational leadership makes a difference in enhancing students` learning.

Studies by Hallinger and Heck (2009) on distributed leadership and school improvement and growth in mathematics achievement found that schools where teachers perceived that leadership is distributed appeared better able to enhance their academic capacity. Similarly, in his study on DL and students` achievement, Lumby (2013) found that organizational outcome like job satisfaction, teacher efficacy, teacher motivation, teacher retention and commitment to their work among others increase in a school where leadership is distributed. Spillane (2013) found that 76% of principals in successful schools encourage distribution of leadership and work with and through other staff in order to improve their organisational performance. Also, a study by Leithwood et al., (2006) concluded that distributing a larger proportion of leadership activity to teachers has a positive influence on teacher effectiveness and student engagement. Some studies conducted in Australia (Hall, 2013) found cumulative confirmation of distributed kind of leadership influence student learning outcomes. Similarly, a study by Harris and Mujis (2005) also found the positive relationship between the degree of teachers` involvement in decision making and student motivation and self-efficacy. The findings also revealed that the effects and impacts of DL on organizational outcomes depends upon the pattern of leadership distribution such as spontaneous alignment and anarchic alignment (Leithwood et al. 2008). Although there is a claim that DL has positive effects on student achievement and organizational change, we have to admit that DL cannot be a panacea or a one size fits all forms of leadership practice.

Spillane (2013) has also concluded that substantial leadership distribution is very important to a school`s success in improving pupil`s outcomes. Spillane (2013) tells us that especial in large secondary schools, the school principal can no longer develop his or her leadership alone through daily interactions with all members and learners; there is need for DL for purposes of providing effective communication and

also giving feedback to learners and teachers in good time. Thus planned approach to DL positively and significantly influence teachers' academic optimism which in turn affects school performance

Leithwood and Mascall, (2008) found shared leadership to be significantly related to team member satisfaction and motivation. Also focusing on the knowledge base concerning the effects of DL, are only recently merging. DL is assumed to have a positive impact on school improvement and school change (Harris 2012). Spillane (2013) claim that sustainable school leadership is leadership that is shared and spread or distributed among members. These assumptions have been empirically confirmed by Hallinger and Heck (2007). Their research results showed direct effects of DL on change in schools' academic capacity and small, but significant indirect effects on student growth rates in Mathematics. Another study by Leithwood et al (2008) which focused on collective or total leadership which refers to the combined influence of different sources of leadership like teachers, staff teams, assistant principals, principals came to conclude that there are modest but significant indirect effects of collective or DL on student achievement through the effect on staff performance.

Finally, Harris (2008) basing on a literature review, assigned major benefits of DL, she claimed that there are positive effects of DL on teachers' levels of morale which might be related to teachers' organizational commitment. Members of staff especially in schools welcome and prefer a team leadership approach which is group cohesion. Teacher's participation in decision making increases organizational commitment which is stronger among teachers whose leaders allow them to participate in decision making. In educational context, participative school decision making and teachers' commitment to the school have been found to be positively correlated as well. Stretching the activities of leadership over several staff members is a sign of acknowledging that members of staff are a crucial element in the management of the school systems. DL result in developing a collegial and co-operative culture among members of staff, and co-operative activities in the school helps the school to mobilise experiences to support the achievement of goals and more experienced members of staff will be willing to mentor less experienced colleagues.

From a different perspective, however, other studies found that the influence of DL did not extend to student engagement or student participation (Gronn, 2008). Mascall, Leithwood, Struss and Sacks (2008) did not find evidence that DL was positively related to teachers' academic optimism, which includes trust, collective efficacy and academic emphasis. Instead, they come to the conclusion that leadership distribution was planned and coordinated. However, based on findings of most of the studies on DL, there is relationship between members' commitment to the achievement of organisational goals and organisational commitment among members is positively related to job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation and organisational citizenship behaviour.

However, in general, there is evidence of the benefits of DL even in the for-profit making sector, researchers came to the conclusion that as more leaders were involved in the development process, gains in performance increased by 30% to 50% (Copland, 2003). Researchers have concluded that as more leaders were involved in the development process, gains in performance were likely to increase; performance was positively related to having multiple leaders in the organization. Shared or DL can yield a significantly greater impact on team and organizational effectiveness than does the more traditional model of hierarchical leadership (Copland, 2003).

In this article, the authors argue that teacher leadership has significant effect on student engagement and far outweighs the principal leadership effects after taking into account home and family background. The importance and significance of teachers' involvement in decision making processes and the contribution of collegial relationship to school improvement and change has been highlighted as crucial in enhancing organisation performance. School principals together with their teachers from a distributed perspective are responsible for school improvement and for creating conducive conditions for teaching and learning so that all students reach their educational goals. Empirical research in the field of education leadership has also come to conclude that DL is a significant factor for school achievement. DL as in teacher leadership has reported positive impact on school improvement and change due to greater involvement, greater motivation and greater commitment among teachers in decision making and decision implementation. In this article, we have argued that DL has the potential to empower teachers and contributes to school improvement through this empowerment and through the spreading of good practices and initiatives by teachers. However, the principal plays a critical role in helping to foster productive forms of DL.

VII. CONCLUSIONS: THE DISTRIBUTED PERSPECTIVE

In this article, we have provided an overview of the practices and fundamentals of DL, how it has developed and the key operational activities involved. Within this paper, we explored the lineage of the concept of DL and its recent rise to prominence in the educational context. We explored the emergency of DL as a discrete body of literature, reflecting on its relative use in relation to alternative conceptions of leadership as a shared process to achieve quality teaching and learning in the schools. In this article, we have argued that the distributed perspective in education leadership and management provides theoretical leverages for studying leadership in education from a distributed perspective. We have retrospectively outlined the motivation for developing our vision of the distributed leadership framework and highlighting the theoretical foundations of DL. In this study, we concluded that teachers who believe that their school is led by a cooperative leadership team that adopts a DL approach and also characterized by group cohesion, clear unambiguous

REFERENCES

roles of the leadership team members and shared goals will show more commitment towards the achievement of their school goals. In a school set up where all leaders are able to coordinate effectively, recognising one another's leadership, they synchronise their leadership efforts and their actions are more effectively channelled within the group of leaders. This cooperation within the leadership and members of staff is valued by all members in the school organisation as it has a positive impact on their activities. Well planned and well-coordinated approaches of DL are characterized by effective interaction, communication and transparency at the school level. The adoption of DL in schools leads to less suspicion or concern which are necessary conditions to positively influence academic optimism. In contrast, DL approaches that are characterized by lack of coordination, systematic planning and competency based leadership are negatively related with academic optimism among teachers and learners at large. We also argue that the quality of support teachers receives from at least one member of the leadership team which is not by definition, the principal, has an important positive influence on their organisational commitment and the achievement of organizational goals. Members of staff in the school feel more committed when at least one member of the leadership team sets direction, sets the vision, operational strategies and goals and encouraging teachers to work towards achieving their goals.

The authors suggest that the establishment or development of DL structures in school and learning organisations should be dependent on a dynamic interplay between the organisation of DL, issues of focus, principal support, legitimization of leadership and a professional attitude towards collaboration, distribution of power and collegial decision making within the organisation. Unquestionably, more empirical research work on DL in the educational context and preferably in Africa where such research is lacking is needed, especially evidence about the actual practice of DL is also urgently needed. Those working within and alongside schools therefore have an important role to play in contributing to the knowledge base by providing grounded examples of DL in action. It should be noted that the key contribution of DL is not in offering a placement for other accounts, but in enabling the recognition of a variety of forms of leadership in a more integrated systematic manner.

To conclude, however, to be truly successful and to achieve the DL promises in the educational context, the concept really needs to connect in a meaningful way with the experiences and aspirations of leadership practitioners as well as explicitly recognising the inherently political nature of leadership within organization and balances in the distribution of power and influence. This will enable DL to move beyond adolescence to the final stage of maturity to be effectively applied in the education landscape as an architecture for organisational development.

- [1] Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- [2] Bennet, N., Wise, C., Woods, PA. and Havey, J.A. (2003). *Distributed Leadership*. Nottingham National College of School leadership.
- [3] Bennett, N., Wise, C., Wood, PA., and Harvey, J.A. (2003). *Distributed Leadership. A Review of literature. National College for School Leadership*. UK.
- [4] Bolden, R. (2011). Distributed leadership in organisations: A Review of theory and Research. *International Journal of Management Review*. Vol 13.251-269.
- [5] Bush, T. and Crawford, M. (2012). Mapping the field over 40 years: A historical review. *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*. 40(5) 537-543.
- [6] Copland, M.A (2003). Leadership of inquiry: building and sustaining capacity for school improvement. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. 25(4): 375-395.
- [7] Crowford, M. (2012). Solo and distributed leadership: Definition and dilemmas. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. 40(5): 610-620
- [8] Diamond, J B. and Spillane J. P. (2016). School leadership and management from a distributed perspective, a 2016 perspective. *Management in Education*. Vol 30 (4) 147- 154.
- [9] Diamond, J.B. (2015) *What is distribution leadership? Key Questions for Educational leaders*. Burlington. Ontario, Canada: Wood & Deed Publishing Incorporated & Edphil Books, 151-156.
- [10] Engstrom, Y. (1999). *Activity theory and Individual and social transformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp19-38.
- [11] Etzioni, A. (1965). Dual Leadership in complex organisations. *American Sociological Review*. 30 pp. 688-698.
- [12] Follet, M.P. (2003). *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett*. London: Routledge.
- [13] Gibbs, C.A. (1954). *Leadership*. Handbook of social Psychology, Vol. 2. Reading, MA: Addison – Wesley, pp 877-917.
- [14] Gronn P (2000). Distributed properties: a new architecture for leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. 28. Pp 317-338.
- [15] Gronn. P. (2002). Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. *Leadership Quarterly*. 13 (4): 423-451.
- [16] Groom, P. (2006). The significance of distributed leadership. *Educational leadership Research*. <http://slc.educ.ubs.ca.ejournal/issue71/index7.html>.
- [17] Groom, P. (2008). *Distributed leadership. Developing tomorrow's Leaders*. London, Routledge Publishers.
- [18] Hall, D. (2013). The Strange case of the emergence of distributed leadership in schools in England. *Educational Review*. 65: 467-487.
- [19] Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. (2009). *Distributed leadership in schools: Does system policy make a difference? Different perspectives*. Dordrecht Netherlands, Springer Press.
- [20] Harris and Spillane, J. (2008). *Distributed leadership through the looking glass: Management in education*. London Sage Publication.
- [21] Harris, (2012). Leadership system transformation. *School leadership and Management*. Vol 3. 179-209.
- [22] Harris, A (2009). *Distributed leadership: Different Perspectives*, Springer, Amsterdam.
- [23] Harris, A and Muijs, D. (2005). *Improving school through Teacher leadership*. London. Open University Press.
- [24] Harris, A. (2008). *Distributed Leadership: Developing Tomorrow's Leaders*, Routledge Publishers, London.
- [25] Harris, A. (2013a). *Distributed Leadership Matters. Perspectives, Practicalities and Potential*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- [26] Harris, A. (2014). *Distributed Leadership Matters, Perspectives, Practicalities and Potential*. Corwin, A Sage Company, London.
- [27] Katz, D and Kahn, R.L. (1966). *The social Psychology of organization*. New York: Wiley.

- [28] Klar, Hw., Juggins, KS., Hammonds, Hle, and Buskey, F. C. (2016). Fostering the capacity for distributed leadership: A Post-heroic approach to leading school improvement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. 19(2): 111-137.
- [29] Leithwood, K Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A. and Hoopkins, D. (2006). *Successful school leadership: What it is and How it influences pupil learning*. Nottingham: DfEs Publications.
- [30] Leithwood, K. and Mascallm, B. (2008). Collective Leadership effects on student's achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, Vol 44 No4, pp. 529-61.
- [31] Leithwood, K. Mascall, B. and Strauss, T. (2009a). *Distributed Leadership according to the Evidence*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- [32] Lumby, J. (2013) Distributed leadership: The uses and abuses of power. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 41(5): 581-597.
- [33] Marphy, J. (2005). *Connecting Teacher Leadership and school improvement*. Thousand Oaks, CA. Corwin Press.
- [34] Mayrowetz, D. (2008). Making sense of distributed leadership: Exploring the multiple usages of the concepts in the field. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 44(3): 424-435.
- [35] Neumerski, CM. (2014). Understanding Instructional leadership by understanding instructional systems: A cross-case comparison of three high-poverty, urban elementary schools. Paper presented to the American Educational Research Association. Annual conference. Philadelphia, PA. April.
- [36] Oduro, G.K.T. (2004). Distributed leadership in schools: What English head teachers say about the Pull and Push factor Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, *University of Manchester*. 16-18 September
- [37] Shava, G N., and F N Tlou, (2018). Distributed Leadership in education, contemporary issues in education leadership. *African Educational Research Journal*. Vol. 694). Pp 279-287. December 2018. Doi 10.30918/AER.64.18.097
- [38] Spillane, J. P (2013). Managing instruction quality & leading instructional improvement: Engaging with the essence of school improvement. *Australian Educational Leader*. 37 (1) 22-26.
- [39] Spillane, J. P. & Coldren, A.F. (2011). *Diagnosis and design for school improvement*. New York, NY. Teachers College Press.
- [40] Spillane, J.P. (2006). *Distributed Leadership*. San Francisco. Jossey Bass.
- [41] Spillane, J.P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- [42] Tian, M. Risku, M and Collin, K. (2016). A Meta-analysis of distributed leadership from 2002 to 2013: Theory development, empirical evidence and future research focus. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 44(1): 145-165.
- [43] Uhl- Bien. M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: exploring the social process of leadership and organizing. *Leadership Quarterly*. 17 pp 654-676.
- [44] Vygotsky. L.S. (1978). *Mind in society. The Development of Higher psychological process*. Cambridge, M.A. Harvard University Press.
- [45] Woods, P. A and Roberts, A. (2016) Distributed Leadership and Social justice. Images and meanings from across the school landscape. *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 19(2): 138-156.
- [46] Yueu, JHP., Chew, DTV., and Ng, D. (2015). Distributed Leadership through the lens of activity theory. *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership*. doi:10.1177/174114321550302.