Teacher leadership potential: assessment in the light of teachers' perceptions in UAE

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Abstract

There has been a great concern about the leadership roles of teachers and how this effectively contribute to the success of the schools and learners as well. This paper investigates teachers' perceptions about their potential to be teacher leaders, identifies the main attributes of teacher leadership and explores the main strategies that promote the development of teacher leadership. An online survey study was conducted as a non-experimental method to answer the research questions with more weight of quantitative than qualitative data. Results show that there is a good potential for teachers to act as leaders who believed that associated abilities of leaders' ethics and interpersonal skills are the most powerful tools for teacher leadership. This study suggests that policy makers should reduce the demarcation of roles and work on distributing the tasks of teacher leadership among the community of teachers to be included in their job description in order to generate responsible teachers who are able to work and lead more effectively.

Keywords: Teacher leader (TL), leadership development, dimensions of teacher leadership

Introduction

Improvement practices of education strongly suggest consistent development of teacher leadership (TL) implications. In the educational context, teachers are usually recognized as leaders who are able to

accomplish high quality of outcomes because their beliefs and practices affect the core functions of teaching and learning processes and influence school culture and educational operations as well (Gabriel (2005). Empowering teachers is not the meaning of TL. But enhancing teachers' prospective energy to successfully share the leadership responsibilities and practices is the actual endeavour that increases the possibility of efficient teachers to become future leaders (Greenlee 2009). In view of Helterbran (2010), teachers are leaders who have enough potential to become instrumental in implementing modern teaching strategies in order to shift the traditional paradigm into more successful learning trends. Therefore, teachers who believe in their leadership abilities can effectively manage and easily improvise useful practices in their classrooms. Thus, it has been increasingly assumed the importance to produce new generation of teachers who cope with leadership requirements (Nudrat & Akhtar, 2014). This study consider the definition of TL as an effective engagement of professional instructors to facilitate, influence, practice and cooperate successfully with their colleagues to achieve the noble goals of the education reform such as improving teaching practices to generate meaningful elaborations of learning to students (Katzenmeyer & Moller 2001).

Purpose, Objectives & Research questions

The purpose of this study is to emphasize the significance of teachers' potential to be leaders that considered as key element to develop their leadership capacity. While, the main objectives are investigating teachers' perceptions about their potential to be TL, identifying the main attributes of TLs and exploring the main strategies that promote TL development. This paper also represents an initial- theoretical attempt to highlight TL skills that are strongly required to support the professional endeavours of education sector in general, teachers in particular.

The study is conducted to answer the following three main questions:

- To what extent do teachers believe that they have the potential to be teacher leaders?

- What are the most important abilities of teacher leaders?

- What are the main strategies that promote the development of teacher leadership?

Statement of the Problem

Educators across the last two decades have noticed limited engagement of teachers in making meaningful decisions, which negatively affect the educational reform efforts (Fullan, 1993; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Ironically, It was explained in the literature that the educational community usually "ask teachers to assume leadership roles without any preparation or coaching, because they appear to intuitively know how to work with their colleagues" (Katzenmeyer & Moller 2001, p. 47). Thus, it was reported that the development of TL is critical to improve students' opportunities to learn because it directly impacts teachers' practices (Klentschy 2008). Nevertheless, some teachers do not even know that they have the potential to develop leadership abilities.

TL has been advanced as a major component of the teachers' professionalization and the success of educational reform in the school (Lambert 2005). Thus, it is educationally not recommended to perceive the educational administrator as the sole instructional leader (Marsh 2000) and ignore the largely unused leadership capital embedded in teachers' potential (Greenlee 2009). However, a small scale of qualitative studies was found in the literature to describe dimensions of TL and factors influence their development (York-Barr & Duke 2016). That is why, core beliefs of teachers regarding their potential and readiness for leadership responsibilities should be examined. Additionally, A recent study conducted in Abu Dhabi about knowledge and promotion of TL recommended further investigation of strategies that promote TL in

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another Emirates of UAE (Al Suwaidi & Schoepp 2015).

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

TL potential is shaped in the literature through seven main dimensions that describe the basic characteristics of a teacher who has the ability to lead successfully. Generic areas of TL are represented in the first three dimensions (Leader ethic, emotional stability and interpersonal skills), while the pillars of TL are represented in the last four dimensions (Teaching proficiency, learning power, collaboration and initiative taking). In addition to strategies and attributes of TL that should be examined to satisfy this area of investigation. The following figure identifies these dimensions that reflect the requisite skills for TLs.

Figure 1: Dimensions of teacher leadership potential
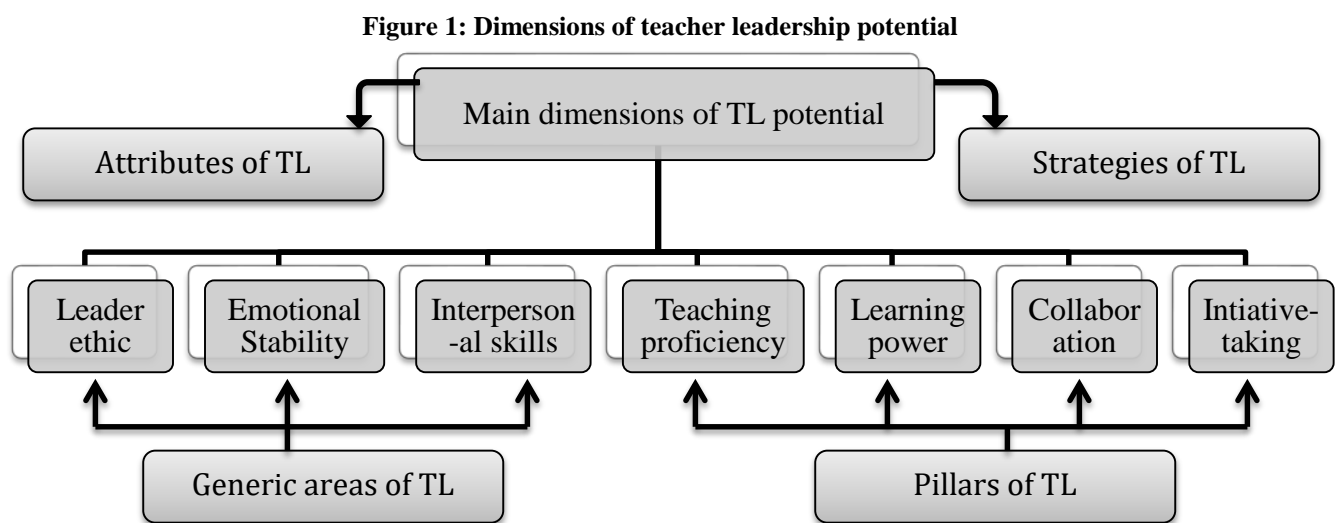
Certain ethics should be prioritized in any leader's personality such as responsibility, integrity, high self-esteem, flexibility and honesty (Danielson 2007). Moreover, TLs should be respectful to others' ideas and have fair-minded responses in difficult situations (Helterbran 2010). Jackson, Burrus, Bassett & Roberts (2010) mentioned that emotional stability lead to better TL interactions. Frost (2010) advocates the idea that the more the ability of TLs to regulate their emotions, the more the successful leadership responses.

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Thus, effective leaders are optimistic, enthusiastic and confident enough to keep their positive attitudes with negative criticism (Youitt, 2007). Moreover, willingness to accept tolerance, showing resilience and self-awareness are also factors that ensure more stability in facing obstacles (Jones 2015). Interpersonal relationship refers to the ability of TLs to build rapport and trust with others to become socially interacted which is valuable in strengthening TL success (Sledge, Morehead & Powers 2007). Additionally, being capable, competent and expertise in the field of teaching and learning is the first step of any teacher to have strong TL potential ((Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Having said that successful leading and consistent learning have a powerful relationship. Teachers should remain open and update themselves to innovative learning instructions (Helterbran 2010). Reasonably, meaningful collaboration with peers is capable to inspire them for more accomplishments (Youitt 2007). Finally, initiative taking is an essential dimension that allows teachers to respond proactively, reflect creatively to solve work problems (Wepner, D'Onofrio, & Wilhite 2008).

Literature review

This research study seeks to understand how participating teachers perceive their own potential to become teacher leaders (TLs). Basically, TL is a growing concept in the literature review, which indicates the need for intensive attention to examine all aspects around this field of interest. In order to inform the aim of the study, the following sections are designed to discuss many relevant features such as roles of TLs, Teacher leadership in UAE including its challenges, personal benefits of TL and teacher leadership development (TLD).

Roles of Teacher Leadership

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The literature of TL does not have one coherent definition of it but many statements with slightly different perspectives. However, all of them confirmed that roles of TL should not replace any roles of schools' administrators (Katzenmeyer & Moller 2001). For example, Wasley (1991) reported that TL is about the teacher who is able to influence and engage his colleagues towards better teaching practices. In addition, TL was also seen as a practicing teacher who usually chosen by fellow members in the educational organization based on its needs which require a formal preparation to this teacher and scheduled time to achieve his leadership roles with no managerial duties (Fay 1992, cited in Al Suwaidi & Schoepp 2015). Later on TL was defined as someone who works cooperatively to achieve improvement purposes in the educational field by using his distinctive power of teaching to generate more meaningful learning experiences to students (Patterson & Patterson 2004).

Having said that leadership term refers to the assumption of intentional influence of leaders who effectively motivate others to achieve certain goals besides taking risks and initiatives to examine new approaches and solve problems (Bush 2008a). Therefore, Callender, Franco-Watkins & Roberts (2015) suggested that giving feedback is valuable to promote not only teachers' instruction but also their metacognitive abilities. Appropriately, it was suggested that no systematic reform would take place in education unless both principles and teachers take on new roles to achieve the reform goals (Hilton, Hilton, Dole & Goos 2015).

Teachers who have leading abilities are usually skilful. Thus, it was stated "teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learner and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice." (Katzenmeyer & Moller 2001, p.5). That is why, they have the power to effectively contribute to the overall school improvement which in order affect students' learning achievements (Frost, Durrant, Head & Holden (2000). More recently, Frost (2010) perceived TL in formulating a variety of important roles such as taking the initiative to investigate new approaches, being a volunteer in supporting colleagues to improve their actual teaching applications,

cooperating with others to strategically achieve desirable changes, collecting adequate evidences to make decisions collaboratively, Being a creative teacher who can add to the professional knowledge of the workplace. This perception corroborates with an empirical study that emphasized the responsibility of teachers in making progress based on their leadership abilities that represent the driving force of the school processing (MacGilchrist, Myers & Reed 2004).

Teacher Leadership in UAE

TL is relatively novel trend in the educational world in general, UAE in particular. Although, some studies have been conducted in the Arab region and UAE to discuss the possibility of applying TL or it can only be replicated. Thus, It is still questionable and the argument has not resolved yet (Al Suwaidi & Schoepp 2015). It was argued that teaching has been viewed as an inferior career in the context of UAE where majority of teachers refrain from developing their leadership abilities. This superficial look of the culture does not facilitate the required leadership environment and makes it difficult to widely distribute TL trends among academic community and reflects that UAE is not prepared for changing this magnitude (Abbas 2012). On the other hand, UAE Vision 2021 National Agenda emphasizes, "all schools [should] have exceptional leadership and internationally accredited teaching staff" (UAE vision 2021, 2009) to achieve one of the main educational targets which is "the development of a first-rate education system" (UAE vision 2021, 2009). Moreover, OECD (2003) reported its belief in the congruent findings of leadership studies that confirm the importance of distributing the authority of leadership among team members although it should be allocated in one person who has the best leaders' characteristics and able to achieve this balance into his team. Therefore, distributing school leadership was mentioned under policy lever 2 to indicate the essential of expanding leadership responsibilities among school members and support the idea of TL (OECD 2009). Meanwhile, many barriers like the ability of teachers to negotiate around their different views, decision making, time and conflict management are all clear challenges for TL in UAE that are

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undeniable (Harold & Stephenson 2012). However, Findings of Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) inspection team indicated that a significant improvement has been remarkably achieved in the quality of leadership in private schools in Dubai (KHDA 2015), which raise the hope to increase the awareness of TL characteristics.

Personal benefits of teacher leadership

Teachers who act as leaders acquire significant benefits that support their personality and position as well. TL accelerates the school improvement, which help those teachers to become personally and professionally satisfied. Furthermore, being a successful member in the educational community raises the investment level and sense of instrumentality. TLs master new learning approaches that promote shifting the traditional teaching paradigm into more professional techniques, which inspire others to up to the educational challenge and provide more positive experiences in their classes (Barth 2001). Based on TL benefits, Nudrat &Akhtar (2014) suggested "Teacher education institutions should take the lead by developing and implementing credible and workable models of TL in their own environment" (p.107). Moreover, much effort has been done in the literature to accommodate emotional traits into teachers' and leaders' personality (Moore 2009) because of its significant role in overall performance (Greenockle 2010). Subsequently, this professional preparation will enhance prospective teachers adopt critical attributes of TL such as continuous learning, creativity, collegiality, proactive attitude, and collaboration and will decrease negative attempts of some educational leaders in schools who subliminally discourage creativity of their team members because they view them as position's threats (Aubrey & Coombe, 2010).

Teacher Leadership development

There is a growing impression worldwide that considers the development of TL as one of the crucial aspects to reflect the new educational provision through the on-going change in the society (OECD 2003). Thus,

sustainability of school improvement strongly requires the collaboration of all school leaders' capabilities through locating more leadership responsibilities to teachers (Harris & Muijs 2002) in order to generate more innovate instructional leaders. In the context of educational leadership, it is becoming gradually inevitable for both TL and administrators to share particular skills through reducing the barriers made by traditional university programs (McCay, Flora, Hamilton & Riley 2001). Thus, educational leaders and administrators should be theoretically aware enough of the nature of TL and practically understand the complexity of the system where TL should be employed to achieve real school change (Bolman & Deal 1994). Consequently, OECD (2011) stated a policy that encompasses treating leadership development as continuum to "Encourage leadership initial training by: including school leadership topics in teacher training and setting up preparatory qualifications or taster courses to select, screen and prepare future school leaders" (p.8).

Applicably, Old literature suggested collaborating more efforts between the schools and higher education faculty to powerfully support both pre-service and in-service teachers (Darling-Hammond 1988). This partnership should have the intent of shifting away from "individual empowerment and role-based initiatives toward more collective, task-oriented and organizational approaches to teacher leadership" (Smylie, Conley & Marks 2002, p. 165). Likewise, Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001) highlighted the effective role of universities, institutions that prepare pre-service teachers who are highly equipped with the required skills and knowledge to be future leaders who have positive attitudes and enlightened beliefs. Moreover, it is essential to enhance the teachers' intrinsic motivation to master TL attributes (Phelps 2008).

Methodology

An "embedded mixed method"(Creswell 2014, p. 221) was selected as a useful strategy to provide a complete understanding of the problem where explaining quantitative results with a qualitative follow-up data collection and analysis will be beneficial to fully answer the research questions in the limited research time. Thus, an online survey study is designed as a non-experimental method with more weight of quantitative than qualitative data collection. This self-report data collection (Johnson & Christensen 2014) is used to investigate the extent to which UAE schools' teachers have the potential to become leaders and to identify attributes of strong TL as well as the main strategies that can promote the development of TL in the light of their own attitudes and perceptions. Essentially, the significance of the study and its purpose were informed, anonymity of participants was kept in order to consider any expected ethical dilemmas.

This study targeted core subject teachers (science, mathematics and English) in UAE private schools as the main population. The snowball sampling technique (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011) was used as the most appropriate type of sampling to increase accessibility and recruitment rate where each volunteer participant was asked to identify other potential participants from colleagues who kindly would like to impact the study. The eligible responses received during six weeks period of research time were fifty-eight replies from only three Emirates; Dubai, Sharjah and Ajman,

Survey Monkey website is used to gather quantitative data through distributing the questionnaire link online to teachers who were willing to participate. Questions in this instrument were adapted and modified from two previous TL research studies in Pakistan and Abu Dhabi (Nudrat &Akhtar 2014; Al Suwaidi & Schoepp 2015) respectively. The coefficient of Cronbach"s alpha was also measured 0.897 that indicates high reliability of results. The questionnaire included five sections that were designed based on TL theories mentioned in the literature to clarify themes of TL skills. Basic demographic information was required in the first section. Followed by total 41 quantitative elements divided into three sections (TL characteristics, TL abilities and strategies to promote TL) to facilitate this explanatory examination of TL knowledge. Last

section involved three qualitative open-ended questions to freely explore teachers' opinions about TL aspects. Besides, a university educational expert reviewed the research protocol and instruments to enhance its content validity (Creswell 2009).
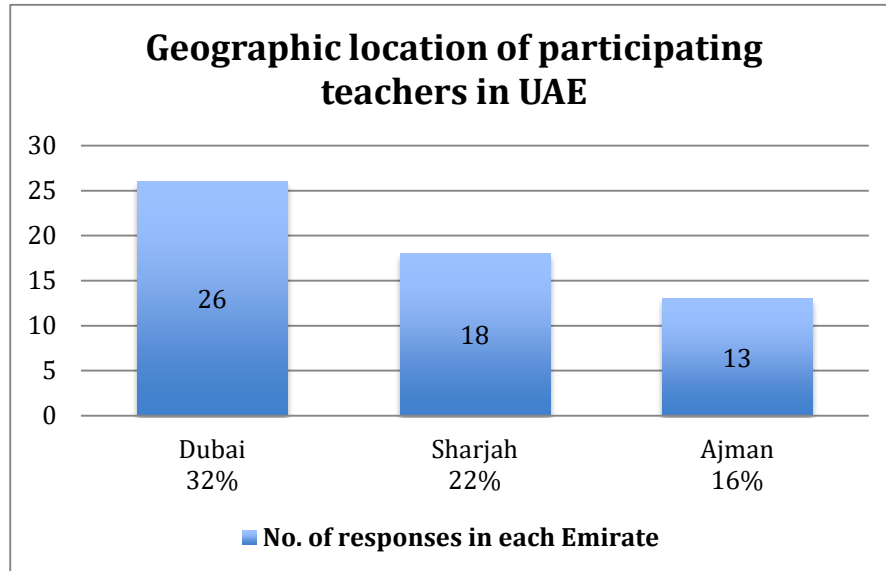
Results & Data analysis

The generated data in the current study reflect the participants' voice. Quantitative data was studied and interpreted using descriptive analysis by measuring the percentages, the frequency or the mean for each cluster to compare the rate of responses of each item statement. Graphs and tables were created to indicate the real results and illustrate the sense of proportions of responses. Besides, the qualitative data that were analysed by measuring percentages of each code formed based on teachers' perceptions.

Teachers' Demographic Information

The following graph shows the geographic location of the core subject teachers participated in the study where highest percentages of responses came from Dubai 26%. While only (18% - 13%) participated from (Sharjah and Ajman) respectively.

Figure 2: Geographic location of participating teachers in UAE

Geographic location of participating teachers in UAE

Emirate	No. of responses	Percentage
Dubai	26	32%
Sharjah	18	22%
Ajman	13	16%

■ No. of responses in each Emirate

| Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	17	22%
Female	40	51%
Academic Qualification		
Bachelor	49	84%
Diploma	4	7%
Master	3	5%
Teaching experiences		
1-4 years	22	27%
5-10 years	28	35%
More than 10	7	9%

Percentages of demographic information of participating teachers indicate that more females (51%) responded to the questionnaire than males (22%). The most significant number of teachers is 49 who have bachelor degree with percentages (84%) of the total responses. Ultimately, the highest percentage (35%) was for 5-10 years teaching experiences. While, the least percentage (9%) was for the teachers who have more than 10 years experiences in education.

Teachers' perception about their potential to be TL

Figure 3 down demonstrates the total mean and percentages of each cluster of TL dimensions based on participating teachers' perceptions to reflect their TL potential. First, respondents significantly believed in their learning power and teaching proficiency with percentages (86% - 82%) respectively. Second, 74% of them trusted their strong interpersonal skills. An exact percentage of responses 70% reflected their own belief about three different TL attributes; collaboration, leadership ethics and emotional stability. Ironically, initiative-taking dimension received the least significant percentage where only 65% of respondents were able to master this skill.

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Figure 3: Characteristics of TL Potential
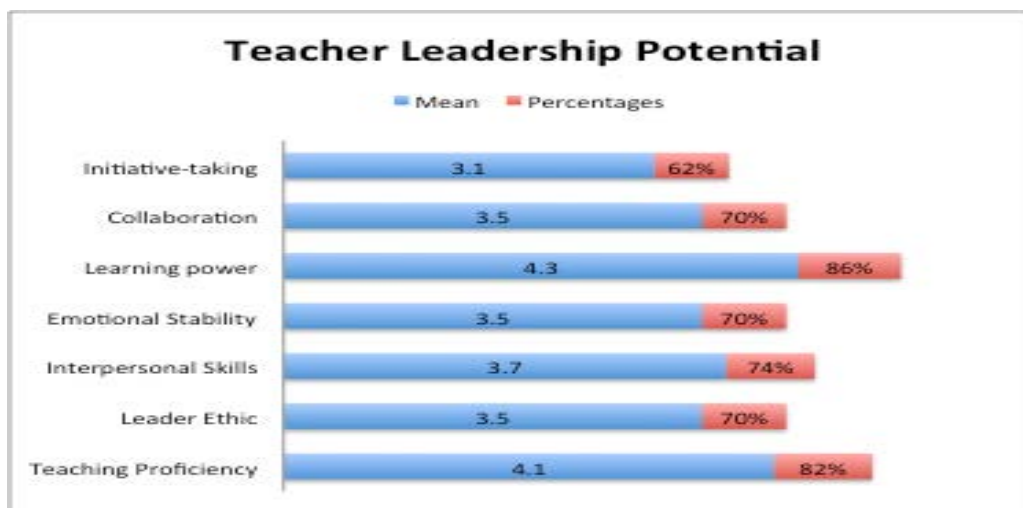
Characteristics of Teacher Leadership Potential in the light of participants' perceptions		Characteristics of TLP	Mean
		4. Emotional Stability	
		Optimistic and enthusiastic teacher	3.8
		Willing to accept difference and tolerance	3.9
Characteristics of TLP	**Mean**	Remain positive even with negative criticism	2.8
1. Teaching Proficiency		**5. Learning power**	
Capable teacher in demonstrating successful instructions	4.2	Personally update my pedagogical knowledge	4.3
Competent in facilitating students' learning	4.1	Open to learning and use different resources to innovate	4.6
Expert in my field (both content & pedagogical) practices	3.9	Contribute to the construction of professional knowledge	4
2. Leader Ethic		**6. Collaboration**	
Open-minded and respectful to others' views	3.5	Motivate others to improve their teaching practices	3.5
Feel responsible to overcome work obstacles	3.8	Promote dialogue for improvement (good listener)	3.4
I have high self-esteem, honesty & integrity	3.1	Recognize accomplishments of others	3.7
3. Interpersonal Skills		**7. Initiative-taking**	
Have strong interpersonal relationship with my colleagues	3.9	Take the initiative to reflect on the latest pedagogical trends	3.2
Prefer working in team work	3.9	Take the initiative to address a work problem	3
Provide support and encouragement to my colleagues	3.2	Take the initiative to improve practice and reflect creatively	3

In details, Table 2 shows the mean scores of all the associated skills under each cluster of TL characteristic that indicate the potential of participating teachers in the study. The highest mean (4.6) was for teachers who are able to be open to learning and use different resources to innovate at their work. Participants confirmed that they update independently their pedagogical knowledge (4.3) and the mean

score for teachers who believe in their capability in demonstrating successful teaching instructions is (4.2). Associated abilities of leadership ethics, interpersonal skills, collaboration were fairly equally in their mean scores. While the least mean scores were (2.9) came for 'remaining positive' in emotional stability domain and (3) for both the ability of teachers to take the initiative to either practice creatively or solve work problems in initiative-taking domain.

Teachers' perception about the most important TL abilities (TLA)
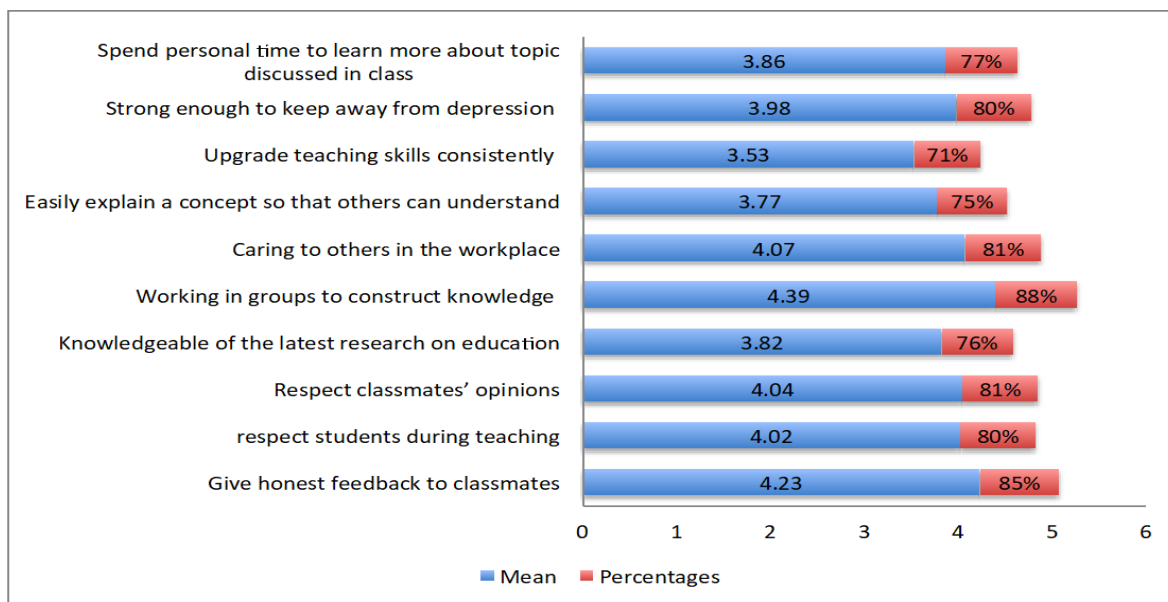
Figure 4: Mean & percentages of TL abilities


Table 3: Descending order of response of TL abilities

Teachers' perceptions about TL abilities		
Strongest TL abilities	**Mean**	**Percentages**
Working in groups to construct knowledge	4.39	88%
Give honest feedback to classmates	4.23	85%
Caring to others in the workplace	4.07	81%
Respect coleagues' opinions	4.04	81%
respect students during teaching	4.02	80%
Strong enough to keep away from depression	3.98	80%
Weakest TL abilities	**Mean**	**%**
Spend time learning more about topics discussed	3.86	77%
Knowledgeable of the latest research on education	3.82	76%
Easily explain a concept so that others can understand	3.77	75%
Upgrade teaching skills consistently	3.53	71%

Figure 4 shows the mean and percentages of the important TLA based on participants' perceptions. Its obviously seen that the percentages are very close and all around the values of 70th and 80th %. That is why, data were organized in table 3 to demonstrate the descending order of responses. TLA that received the highest percentages from 88% to 80% were defined as the strongest TLA that are the ability to 'work in groups, provide feedback honestly, care to others, respect colleagues and students and keep away from depression'. These choices reflect that teachers believe that associated abilities of leaders ethics and interpersonal skills are crucial and powerful tools of TL.

While, other abilities that perceived the least percentages were called the weakest TLA that are 'spend time learning, knowledgeable of educational findings, explain concepts easily and upgrading teaching skills'. These choices reflected that the associated skills of learning power of TL are least important abilities in the light of teachers' understanding.

Teachers' perception about strategies required to promote TL

Figure 4: Strategies required to promote TL

Strategies to promote TL
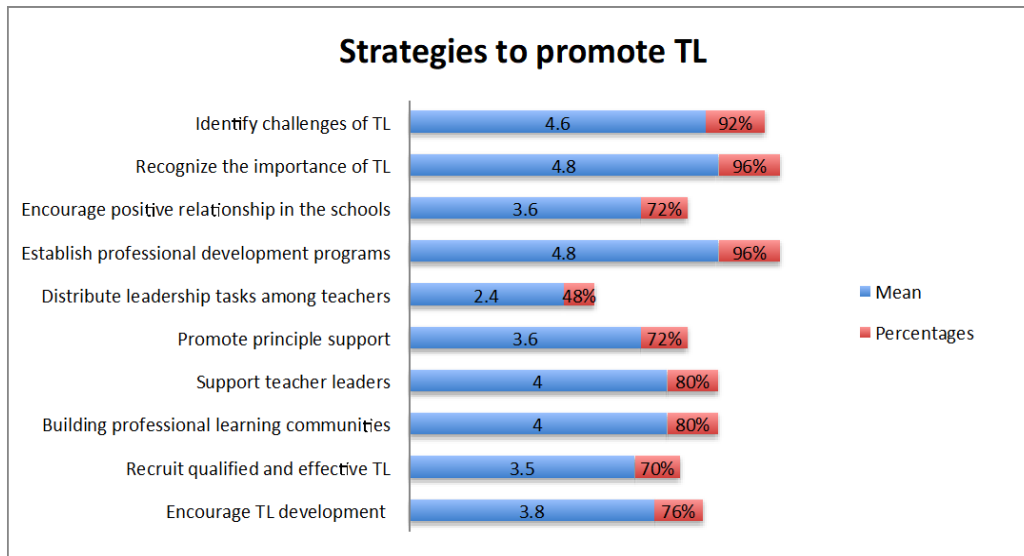
As it can be seen in figure 4 above, the highest percentage of teachers (96% - 92%) believed that 'establish PDPs, recognize the importance of TL' and 'identify challenges of TL' respectively are the most officious strategies to enhance TL. Strategies like 'support TLs' and 'build professional learning communities' received (80%) of responses to be at the second place. Whereas, four important strategies came at the third place, 'encourage TL development' (76%), same percentage (72%) for both 'encourage positive relationships in schools' and 'promote principle support' and (70%) of teachers believed that recruiting qualified and effective TLs is essential to promote TL.

While participants responded positively to variety of TL skills that reflect their TL potential, more than half of them do not agree with the assumption of distributing leadership tasks among them and only (48%) of them agreed with this strategy, which indicates their lack of ambition towards leadership roles.

Qualitative responses of teachers

Teachers' qualitative data was coded for analysis purpose where percentages of each code are presented in the following graphs.

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> **Teachers' beliefs on their leadership potential**

Figure 5: TL potential
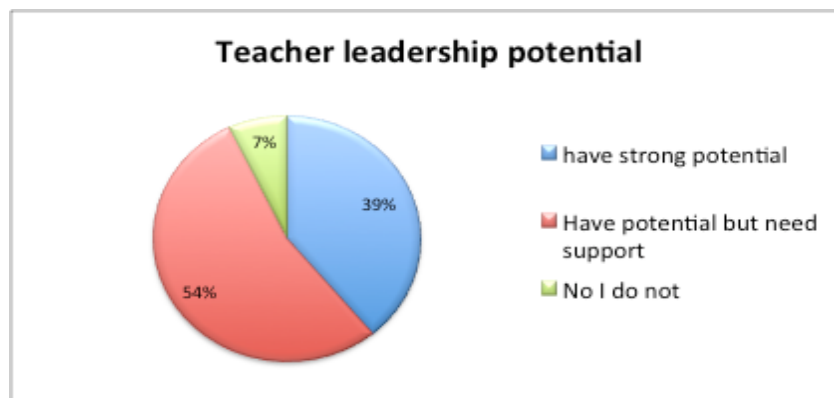
Teachers were asked about if they have the potential to be leaders. Figure 5 shows that more than half of responses (54%) believed in their potential to be leaders but mentioned that they need support and learning to develop their TL abilities. For example: one of them said 'Although, *I have TL potential as I am responsible enough and respect commitments, I still need to learn more about leadership. Providing support through workshops may be effective to enhance my TL abilities'*. However, (39%) of teachers were confident about their strong potential, who said *'Definitely, I do have potential to be a leader. I am always supportive to everybody and try to solve problems creatively'*. While, only (7%) of them admitted that they have no potential for this responsibility and said that *'Being a leader is not my interest. I do not think that I have this potential or abilities of leadership personality'*. These results indicate the importance of PDPs that inform teachers and satisfy their needs for better TL practices.

Attributes of successful TL

Teacher leadership potential

Figure 6: Frequency & percentages of required attributes of successful TL
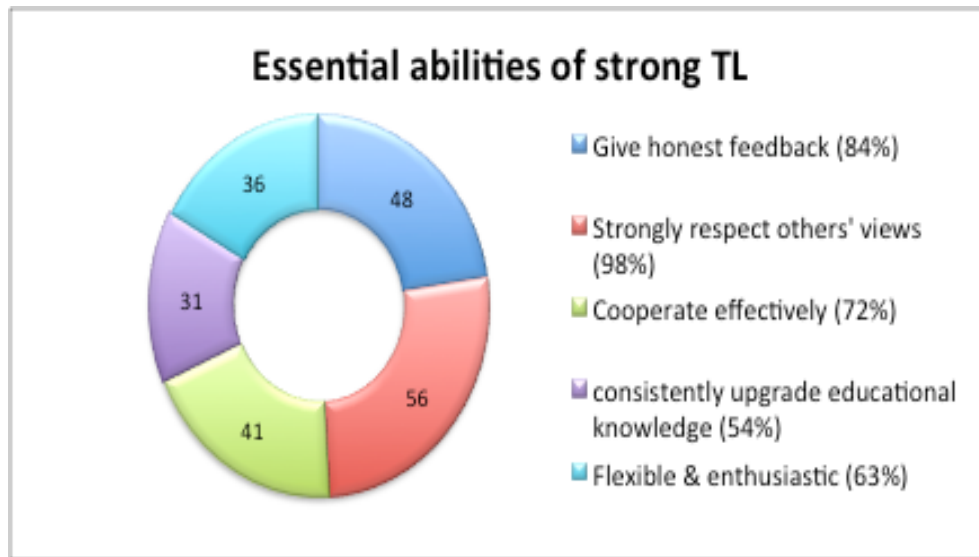
Teachers were asked about the main attributes of the successful leader. Responses were coded based on five attributes that were frequently mentioned. For example: one of the participants said ' *I think successful TL should usually respect his colleagues' opinions and students' needs and should give honest feedback and recognize the strengths of others. TLs should be keen about learning new trends to upgrade himself and support others as well'*. Another participant added *'TLs should be consistently respectful & knowledgeable to ensure success. Being flexible and positive even with negative criticism is highly required to communicate and cooperate effectively with other'*. Thus, (98%) of them believed that TL should totally respect others' opinions and give honest feedback with percentage (84%). Moreover, TL should cooperate effectively (72%), be flexible & enthusiastic (63%). Finally, (54%) of them are consistent in upgrading their knowledge.

Factors affecting TL development

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Figure 7: Factors affecting TL development
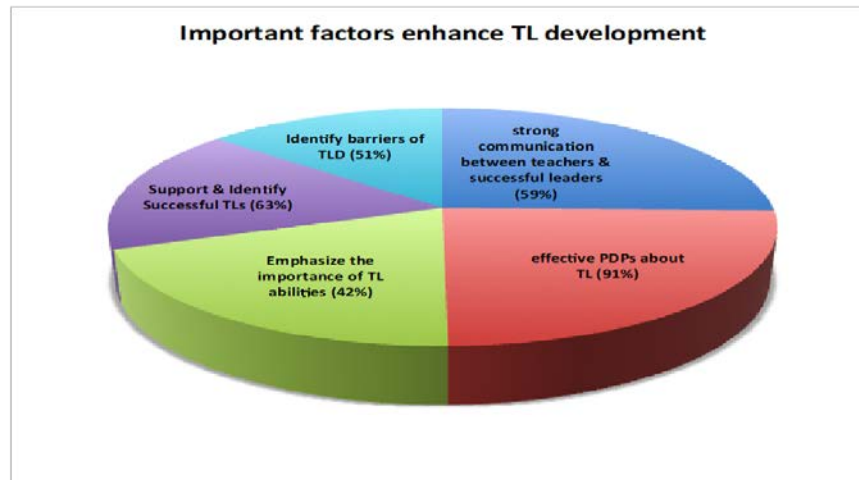
Again five codes were raised to analyse teachers' perceptions about main factors affect TL development based on their experiences. Effective professional development programs were the most significant factor with percentages (91%) who mentioned that ' *The main factor that strongly enhance TL development is PDPs to teachers to stress the value of this concept through identifying its features and barriers to acquire its* skills' and added that *'PDPs are the real need to enhance TL because not all teachers expect to have the chance to have any leading positions, so highlighting the importance of TL abilities might motivate them'*.

Teachers also believed that *'direct communication between teachers and strong and effective leaders emphasize the importance of TL abilities and encourage teachers to develop their own. Successful leaders always support teachers to become leaders as well'*. According to the given responses, more than half of the participants identified the following factors; 'supporting and identifying successful TLs, 'strong communication between teachers and successful leaders' and 'identifying barriers of TL development' with percentages (63% - 59% - 51%) respectively. The least significant factor mentioned by participants was 'identifying the importance of TL abilities' to teachers and community with

percentage (42%). Thus, the qualitative quotes supported that statistical results that are all discussed in the following section.

Discussion

Although participating teachers' perceptions reflected their good potential to act as leaders with more significant responses to associated abilities of both 'learning power' and 'teaching proficiency', which are considered as pillars of TL than all other generic characteristics of TLs. They considered elements of 'learning power' as the weakest TL attributes, which in turn reflect their misunderstanding of the importance of this pillar of TL proficiency.

Empirical literature asserted that being recognized as a professional teacher who is capable to implement meaningful instructions as an expert (Danielson 2007) is the first step on the way of TL aptitude (Katzenmeyer & Moller 2001). Unfortunately, findings of this study assumed lack of initiative-taking abilities among participants. Frost (2010) emphasizes the general importance of all teachers to understand their responsibility towards taking the initiative of upgrading their pedagogical trends to successfully improve their practices regardless having a leading position or not. These results matches findings of a previous study in Pakistan that indicates awareness of teachers about strong TL but they did not value the facet of 'initiative taking' of TL (Nudrat &Akhtar 2014). Consequently, reinforcement should be provided to educators who show initiative (Phelps 2008) and remain positive in order to inspire others. There is no doubt that the deficiency of less emotional stability should be put right first because the more emotional regulation, the better TL communication (Jackson et al. 2010). It is well known that the dynamic nature of schools' activities might cause stress and frustration to teachers, which negatively affect their emotional stability. Therefore, it is vital to enhance the quality of leaders who consistently develop coherent set of

skills such as emotional intelligence that support them to confidently manage their feelings and emotional responses and positively influence others (Moore 2009). However, the low mean scores of 'initiative-taking' side by side with high scores of 'learning power' reveal an encouraging sign to prepare purposeful professional development programs for teachers to fill their learning gaps about TL and promote their skills, which was confirmed as a need in teachers' qualitative responses.

The study findings revealed top six TLA which is closer to the strongest TL aspects presented in the findings of (Nudrat &Akhtar 2014) except the highest ability 'working collaboratively in groups to construct knowledge' that was found as one of the deficient abilities in this previous study. TL Theories in the literature confirmed that honest feedback is critical to ensure sustainable modifications and improvement of teachers' implementation at the classroom (Callender et al. 2015). Additionally, Building trust and appreciation of qualities between students and the instructors as well as teaching colleagues is a bright mark of TL (Danielson 2007). The property of caring to people with accepting differences in opinions is a must to successful TLs (Frost 2010). Importantly, participating teachers looking at being away from depression as a strong trait of a resilient TL, which is extremely advocated in the literature where strong TL remain positive and enthusiastic even with no support (Youitt, 2007).

The weakest TLA that were exhibited in the present findings strongly require consistent attention and enhancement. The desire to explore new information beyond the classroom limitation is fundamental learning strategies for teachers. Thus, academic leaders should take the initiative to increase teachers' awareness about such explorations. Although Sledge et al. (2007) emphasized the crucial influence of teachers' reflection on the new scholastic trends, it seems that teachers are less focused on upgrading their knowledge from latest educational findings. That is why; upgrading their teaching skills consistently was emerged as another weak ability of TL in the present findings.

The most applicable strategies that promote TL in the light of teachers' setting were 'establishing PDPs and recognize the importance of TL'. These quite appropriate strategies are consistent with Al Suwaidi & Schoepp (2015) that conducted in Abu Dhabi. This results matches previous suggestion that strongly advocate the relationship between students' acquisition of knowledge and skills through educational leadership programs and enhancing their involvement in TL practices (Greenlee 2009). Moreover, few responses to 'distributing TL tasks among teachers' reflect their limited expectations to have leadership positions at the schools they work for, which is clearly stated at their qualitative responses. Actually, demarcation of teachers' responsibilities is a big obstacle that pushes against TLs elaboration (Harris 2003). Subsequently, these challenges should be considered as a serious attempt to foster the development of TL.

Implications

Firstly, Policy makers should reduce the demarcation of roles and work on distributing the TL tasks among the community of teachers to be included in their job description in order to generate responsible teachers who are able to work and lead more effectively. Secondly, educational organization should evaluate and encourage TL abilities for enhancement purposes of teaching quality. Educational leaders should be able to recognize teachers who have strong potential and desire to be rewarded and used as a practical and successful model of TLs. Teachers should be encouraged to understand the value of additional readings about recent research findings and its importance in upgrading their pedagogical knowledge to enhance teaching effectiveness. Finally, KHDA should consider TL qualities and include them in its assessment criteria, which has a great power to accelerate the progress of schools' operations.

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Conclusion

In a nutshell, sampled teachers are aware to a high degree to their TL potential and this should be the nucleus from which policy makers should start to effectively work on improving all their deficient aspects of TL. Having said that participating teachers in UAE are so proud of their strong learning capacity, which is a key quality of TL. It is beneficial to launch their power towards enhancing their TL knowledge, abilities, skills and practices through effective professional development programs. Moreover, UAE participating teachers are willing to attend professional structures to enhance the educational reform in the classroom through realizing their actual limitations and interestingly work hard to address them. Thus, the associated skills of generic areas of TL domains should be stressed because of its positive influence on the educational community. The current study suggests that the absence of specific and clear conceptual framework to guide consistently both TL development programs and its evaluation will negatively continue to keep TL concept as a vague and its essential attributes will continue to be intermittent

Limitation & Recommendations

This study is limited to three Emirates in UAE. Further inquiries and investigations in the domain of TL should be conducted to close all its gaps in different Emirates. It is suggested for future research in UAE to examine the path of TL influence on students' achievements.

Additionally, the sample size is limited to 57 respondents. Thus, recruiting more random sample size is suggested to enhance the opportunity of generalization. It is also beneficial to collect more qualitative data through focus group interview with teachers and leaders, which was difficult to be done in the current study

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because of the limited time. Thus, mixed method approach is advised to gain benefits from applying both types of data collection to provide more in-depth and breadth understanding of this TL concept.

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