

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter constitutes a literature review, which draws from both international and local literature to examine how the concept of teacher leadership has been understood and developed in schools. In addition, the literature review also examines the competing definitions of teacher leadership, identifies the models of teacher leadership and the factors that facilitate and hinder teacher leadership. The theoretical framework underpinning my research is that of distributed leadership theory. Here, the literature review focuses on the various definitions and models of distributed leadership, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, the literature review begins with a discussion of leadership and management. These two concepts are essential to any discussion of teacher leadership and distributed leadership. It is therefore important that their conceptual use in the study is clarified. The chapter concludes by contextualising my research within the literature.

#### **2.2 Leadership and Management**

Leadership and management are at the heart of a school or any organisational life. It is these aspects of school life that ensure that all other aspects are held together and developed (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997). It is therefore important to have an understanding of these terms, in order to understand teacher leadership. While the concepts of leadership and management overlap with each other, and with the related notion of administration (Bush, 2008), both are necessary for schools to become learning organisations (Senge, 1990). Leadership in complex organisations is an increasingly important, yet often confusing topic, which can be further illuminated by exploring its relationship to management. Such a comparison helps clarify the function, the process, the structure and the origins of leadership (Kotter, 2008).

For the purpose of this study, a comparison of such scale is impractical. The aim is to highlight some of the differing perspectives on whether leadership and management can be

considered to be separate activities, or whether the concepts are used interchangeably to refer to the same activity. Ultimately, the literature review on leadership and management aims to contextualise teacher leadership. The concepts of power and control are central to any consideration of leadership and management (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997). This is particularly important when there are changes in power relationships within the school, as implied by the concepts of distributed leadership and teacher leadership. Leadership itself, however, remains an elusive concept (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) describe leadership in the school context as the art of facilitating the school to do the right thing at the right time, while management describes the discipline required to ensure that this takes place. In this view, leadership is seen as a relationship of influence, and management as a system of control. Leadership, according to Bush (2008), tends to be more formative, proactive and problem-solving, dealing with such things as values, mission and vision, whereas the concerns of management are more to do with the execution, planning, organising and deploying of resources. In addition, Fidler (1997) contends that leadership is associated with a sense of purpose and confidence that is engendered in followers, and influences followers towards a goal or task. These definitions highlight the operational concept to be 'influence', rather than 'authority'. While both of these are dimensions of power, the latter tends to reside in formal positions, while the former could be exercised by anyone in the school. In this sense, leadership is independent of positional authority, while management is linked directly to it (Bush, 2008).

One of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management is provided by Cuban (1988) cited in Bush (2008). He links leadership with change, while management is seen as a maintenance activity. He also stresses the importance of both dimensions of organisational activity, where he argues that while managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function tends to be towards maintenance, rather than change. This study prizes both managing and leading, attaching no special value to either of these, since different settings and times call for a varied set of responses. Furthermore, Kotter (2001) emphasises that leadership and management are complementary, where only organisations that embrace both sides of the contradiction can thrive in turbulent times.

Recent writing on leadership has emphasised that there is a need for it to be demonstrated at all levels in an organisation and not just at the top (Spillane, 2001). It is seen to be an essential component of an organisation and it is part of the head of the organisation's role to develop leadership capacity within the school (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Leadership is dispersed throughout the whole organisation, and it is not the leader, but the leadership that is the key factor (Earley & Weindling, 2005). As Senge (1990) concludes, leaders are people who lead through developing new skills, capabilities and understandings. Moreover, they come from many places within the organisation.

### **2.3 Distributed Leadership**

The notion of distributed leadership is one that has come to have increasing currency within the field of education. It is an idea that is growing in popularity, even though interpretations of the term vary (Harris & Spillane, 2008). The concept, distributed leadership, attracts a range of meanings (Spillane & Sherer, 2004) and is associated with a range of practices, with varying implications for organisational practices and values (Woods, Bennet, Harvey & Wise, 2004). The concept of distributed leadership also has many similarities to notions such as 'shared', 'collective', 'collaborative', 'emergent' and 'co-' leadership, and has some common theoretical and practical origins (Bolden, 2011).

In contrast, for other researchers, the concept of distributed leadership is used interchangeably with 'shared leadership,' 'team leadership,' and 'democratic leadership.' However, shared leadership, team leadership and democratic leadership are not synonyms for distributed leadership. Depending on the situation, a distributed perspective allows for shared leadership. A team leadership perspective, however, does not necessarily involve subscribing to a distributed perspective, in which leadership practice is viewed as an interaction of leaders, followers, and the situation in which they find themselves (Spillane, 2006). From this perspective, distributed leadership tends to be understood from a normative perspective, as a means for enhancing the effectiveness of, and engagement with, leadership practices (Bolden, 2011).

Similarly, a distributed perspective allows for the kind of leadership that can be democratic or autocratic (Spillane, 2006). It is important to note that while leadership may be shared and/or democratic in certain situations, that this is not a necessary or sufficient requirement for it to be considered distributed leadership. In addition, while the concepts of delegated leadership, democratic leadership and dispersed leadership may have similarities with distributed leadership, they are not the same. From a distributed perspective, leadership can be stretched over leaders in a school, but is not necessarily democratic (Spillane, 2006). In this study, I am of the opinion that while distributed leadership shares similarities to 'shared', 'team', and 'democratic' leadership, they cannot be used interchangeably to refer to distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is utilised differently to the above-mentioned concepts. Distributed leadership signifies a shift in focus from the attributes and behaviours of individual 'leader' to a more systemic perspective, whereby, 'leadership' is conceived as a collective social process, emerging through the interactions of multiple actors (Bolden, 2011).

Equating leadership with the actions of those in leadership positions is inadequate for three reasons. Firstly, leadership practice typically involves multiple leaders in formal and informal roles. Secondly, leadership practice is not something done to followers. From a distributed perspective, followers are one of the three constituting elements of leadership practice (Spillane, 2006). Thirdly, it is not the actions of individuals, but the interactions among them, that are critical in leadership practice (Spillane, 2001; Spillane et al., 1999, 2001, 2004; Gronn, 2000, 2002a, b). Distributed leadership acknowledges that the work of leading and managing schools involves multiple leaders (Spillane, 2001) at various levels of the organisation. Leadership is seen as the property of a number of actors at school level, and is not solely invested in the Principal (Gronn, 2000; Spillane et al, 2001).

### **2.3.1 Definitions of Distributed Leadership**

The concept of distributed leadership has attracted a multitude of definitions over the years. The field of education leadership has used the term distributed leadership in a number of ways. Firstly, as a theoretical lens for looking at the activity of leadership. At a theoretical level, distributed leadership is an analytical frame for understanding leadership practice. Gronn (2002a, b) and Spillane et al. (2001, 2004) use distributed leadership to

define a way of thinking about the practice of school leadership. For Gronn (2000), distributed leadership is a group activity, where influence is distributed throughout the organisation and where “leadership is seen as fluid and emergent, rather than as a fixed phenomenon”. As an analytical frame, distributed leadership focuses on the complex interactions of leadership as practice rather than leadership as role (Mayrowetz, 2008). An important outcome of importing the theoretical idea of distributed activity into the study of leadership is to emphasise that the traditional conception of leadership as person- or role-based, is poorly aligned to the realities of work in organisations, especially schools (Gronn, 2000).

The weakness of using a theoretical perspective is the ambiguities over which activities might actually count as leadership. This has led at least one scholar to suggest that the notion of leadership, as tied to organisational goal attainment, has outgrown its utility, because it is basically impossible to demarcate where leadership ends, and where regular work begins (Mayrowetz, 2008). Secondly, it is important to discuss distributed leadership for democracy. The descriptive notion of leadership as an activity that is practiced through the interaction of multiple individuals, is seen as a prescriptive message for leadership to be shared throughout the school in a more democratic fashion. However, as Harris and Spillane (2008) have asserted, a flattening of the hierarchy does not necessarily comprise distributed leadership.

Thirdly, distributed leadership for efficiency and effectiveness. According to Elmore (2000), in a knowledge-intensive organisation such as teaching and learning, there is no way to perform the complex tasks of teaching and learning without widely distributing responsibility for leadership among roles in the organisation. However, as Bennet, Harvey, Wise and Woods (2003) remind us, “distributed leadership is not something ‘done’ by an individual ‘to others’, rather it is an emergent property of a group or network of individuals in which group members pool their expertise”. The utilisation of expertise where it exists in the organisation will lead to greater efficiency. Certain researchers (such as Elmore, 2003) have also argued strongly that distributed leadership can lead to organisational effectiveness. Distributed leadership, however, has a limited empirical research base to support these claims (Bennet et al., 2003).

Fourthly, a distributed perspective urges us to focus on others in the school, who by virtue of formal position or informal role, take on leadership responsibilities (Spillane and Sherer, 2004). This promotes the idea that by having multiple people engage in leadership, the collective capacity of the organisation will increase to the point where the school might in fact increase its shortcomings. As Harris and Muijs (2005) explain: “distributed leadership concentrates on engaging expertise where it exists in the organisation rather than seeking this only through formal position or role.” These authors go on to say that distributed leadership offers the school “multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent by a common culture”. The empirical results show that this formulation of distributed leadership has led to some collective capacity building, which is arguably leadership development, but that there has been less school improvement than was hoped for.

One universal definition of distributed leadership may never be achieved (Mayrowetz, 2008), as different emphases are possible in research and theorisations of distributed leadership. The context within which leadership is distributed and the main aim of the distribution will impact on the definition of distributed leadership utilised.

In a review of the literature, Bennet et al. (2003) suggests that despite some variation in definition, distributed leadership is a model of leadership with three distinctive elements. First, distributed leadership highlights leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals. This contrasts with leadership as a phenomenon which arises from the individual. Secondly, distributed leadership suggests the openness of the boundaries of leadership. This means that it is predisposed to widen the conventional net of leaders. Thirdly, distributed leadership entails the view that varieties of expertise are distributed across the many and not the few. This distributed leadership is represented as dynamic, relational, inclusive, collaborative, and contextually-situated (Bolden, 2007).

### **2.3.2 Models of Distributed Leadership**

According to Harris and Spillane (2008), there are three main reasons for the current popularity of distributed leadership. Firstly, distributed leadership has normative power as it reflects the current changes in leadership practice in schools. Secondly, distributed leadership has representational power. It represents alternative approaches to leadership

that have arisen due to the increased external demands on schools. Thirdly, distributed leadership has empirical power. The key contribution of distributed leadership is, however, not in offering a replacement for other forms of leadership, but in enabling the recognition of a variety of forms of leadership in a more integrated and systematic manner (Bolden, 2011). The potential ability of distributed leadership to do this is, however, somewhat limited by its restrictions to particular contexts and locations, and its close similarities to “shared leadership” (Bolden, 2011).

Work in distributed cognition and socio-cultural activity theories have proven fruitful in understanding human activity in complex and emergent situations (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). This is evidenced in the work of Peter Gronn and James Spillane. Of all the authors, who have attempted to develop a model of distributed leadership, Gronn (2000, 2002) and Spillane et al. (2004) are perhaps the most comprehensive. In each case, they have used Activity Theory as a theoretical means by which to frame the idea of distributed leadership practice, using it as a bridge between agency and structure; as ‘distributed cognition’ in Gronn’s case, and as ‘action’ in the case of Spillane et al. (Bolden, 2007).

What distinguishes distributed cognition from other approaches is the commitment to two related theoretical principles. The first concerns the boundaries of the unit of analysis for cognition. The second concerns the range of mechanisms that may be assumed to participate in cognitive processes (Hutchins, 2000). Therefore, according to Hutchins (1995), it is imperative to investigate practice in its ‘natural habitat’. Hutchins (1995) documents the way in which the task of landing a plane can be best understood within a framework that includes the manufactured tools and social context of the cockpit that situates a pilot’s activity. These features of the environment are not merely ‘aides’ to the pilot’s cognition, rather, they are best understood as essential features of a composite which has the cockpit as the basic unit of analysis (Hutchins, 1995).

Spillane et al. (2001, 2004) borrow from the language of distributed cognition and speak of expertise and responsibilities as being ‘stretched over’ people in different roles, rather than as neatly divided amongst them. Spillane et al. (2001) are also of the opinion that the prevailing framework of individual agency – focused in positional leaders such as principals – is inadequate, as leadership is not just a function of what those leaders know and do.

Rather than viewing leadership as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill, the distributed perspective defines it as the interactions between people and their situation. These interactions, rather than any particular action, are critical in understanding leadership practice. Hence, the distributed leadership frame shifts the level of analysis from the individual actor or group of actors to the web of leaders, followers and situation that give activity its form (Spillane & Sherer, 2004).

In addition, Spillane et al. (2001, 2004) appropriate concepts from distributed cognition and activity theory that underscore the way in which social context is an integral component, not just a container, for intelligent activity. Leadership practice is stretched over organisational structures. A distributed perspective forces us to consider organisational structure as more than a vessel for leadership activity (Spillane et al., 2001). Their distributed perspective suggests that leadership activity at the level of the school, rather than at the level of the individual leader, is the appropriate unit for thinking about leadership and its improvement.

A distributed perspective differs in at least two respects. First, the situation does not simply affect what school leaders do as an independent, external variable. Rather it defines leadership practice in interaction with leaders and followers (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). Second, there is a two-way relationship between situation and practice. Aspects of the situation can either enable or constrain practice, while practice can likewise transform the situation (Spillane, 2006). According to Spillane et al. (2004), school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, stretched over the school's social and situational contexts.

The Distributed Leadership Study (Spillane et al., 1999, 2001, 2004) and the work of Peter Gronn (2000) take a similar perspective on distributed leadership. What is most distinctive about the notion of distributed leadership is what Gronn (2000, 2002a, b) terms "concertive action". Concertive action is the additional dynamic which is the product of conjoint activity. This describes the way in which people work together such that they pool their initiative and expertise, where the outcome is a product or energy is greater than the sum of their individual actions. This is not simply about creating more 'leaders', but about facilitating 'concertive action' and pluralistic engagement (Gronn, 2000, 2002a). In effect, distributed



leadership is far more than the sum of its parts. Gronn's conception of "hybrid configurations" of leadership highlights the important balance between individual, collective and situational aspects of leadership practice and, importantly, when and why particular configurations are more effective or desirable than others (Bolden, 2011).

Whereas transformational leadership places an emphasis on the agency of the individual, distributed leadership gives prominence to "the social dynamics that emerges from the combined agency of people talking and sharing initiatives and responding to and building on those proactively and creatively" (Woods, 2005). Distributed leadership derives from the fact that large-scale improvement requires concerted action among people with different areas of expertise and a mutual respect that stems from an appreciation of the knowledge and skill requirements of different roles (Elmore, 2000).

### **2.3.3 Strengths of Distributed Leadership**

There is increasing research evidence that distributed leadership makes a positive difference to organisational outcomes and student learning (Harris & Spillane, 2008). There are also an increasing number of studies that highlight a powerful relationship between distributed forms of leadership and positive organisational change (Harris et al., 2007). According to Harris and Lambert (2003), the concept of distributed leadership extends the boundaries of leadership insofar as it entails higher levels of teacher involvement and utilises a wide variety of expertise, knowledge and skills. A key strength of the distributed perspective is that it urges us to focus on others in the school who, by virtue of formal position or informal role, take on leadership responsibilities.

According to Harris (2005), distributed leadership promotes the development of collegial norms amongst teachers, which contribute to school effectiveness. In addition, by allowing teachers to work as a collective it provides them with a legitimate source of authority. It challenges existing assumptions about the nature of leadership, the context within which it occurs, and the relationship between power, authority and influence (Williams, 2011). Hallinger and Heck (2009) conclude that the results of their research supports the view that distributed school leadership and a set of key educational processes are related to school improvement in several ways consistent with the proposed theoretical model.

### **2.3.4 Limitations of Distributed Leadership**

Distributed leadership, like all other approaches to leadership, is not beyond criticism. The different terms and definitions that are used interchangeably to refer to distributed leadership result in both conceptual confusion and conceptual overlap (Harris & Spillane, 2008). This is problematic, as the true meaning of distributed leadership is obscured and, in addition, distributed leadership will simply be used as 'catch all' term to describe any type of devolved, shared or dispersed leadership practice (Spillane & Harris, 2008). Furthermore, this lack of conceptual clarity hinders the uptake of distributed leadership in schools. If the concept is often used interchangeably, distributed leadership in its true form may not be achieved.

There is also the implicit tension between the theoretical and practical interpretations. In the theoretical sense, distributed leadership is located in the general area of situated and distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995a, b). Here it is best understood as "practice distributed over leaders, followers and their situation" (Spillane et al., 2001). In a practical sense, the main concern is as to how leadership is distributed, by whom, and with what effect (Harris, 2008).

Wright (2008) provides a summary of some of the main limitations of distributed leadership. According to her, proponents of distributed leadership do not take cognisance of the situation which constitutes and defines leadership practice. In particular, she refers to principals who, by nature of their appointment, participate as "unequal subjects". In addition, the roles and responsibilities of principals as defined at provincial and district level does not facilitate the implementation of distributed leadership in schools. Lastly, she concludes that insufficient attention is often given to ethical and micropolitical issues in the implementation of distributed leadership. Bolden (2011) is of a similar view, and states that "for distributed leadership to be truly successful, it 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 organisations and imbalances in the distribution of power and influence".

There are also challenges to the practical implementation of distributed leadership. MacBeath (2005) argues that distributed leadership is premised on trust, implies a mutual

acceptance of one another's leadership potential, requires formal leaders to 'let go' some of their control and authority, and favours consultation and consensus over command and control. Each of these poses a serious challenge to traditional hierarchical models of authority and control in organisations, and can place severe physical and psychological demands on designated managers (Bolden, 2007). In addition, when distributed leadership is not executed properly or when exclusively implemented according to a top-down approach, it can be interpreted as misguided delegation, or even as coercion (Hatcher, 2005).

In addition, the social and situational contexts within which the school is embedded may create and sustain the conditions within which distributed leadership can flourish, while others are likely to hinder a more distributed leadership style. Woods (2005) identifies three main obstacles that will inhibit the actualisation of distributed leadership, namely: context, people and practice. In South African, context can best be described by the following quote from the National Department of Education (2003) "...the entrenched bureaucratic and hierarchical management practices inherited from apartheid tradition". While policies have been enacted, the authoritarian ethos continues to pervade the education system at both the micro and macro-level (Williams, 2011). Factors that are people-based refer to an authoritarian mentality, fear of a loss of power, and school cultures that are steeped in deeply-ingrained attitudes (Grant, 2006).

Lastly, as a consequence of the authoritarian form of leadership has been the development of a tradition of non-participation in the decision making processes at school level on the part of the teachers. This factor is practice-based. The degree of control and autonomy is another major variable in distributed leadership. Although the concept of distributed leadership may appear to stand at odds with strong senior leadership, there is no necessary contradiction. The view of distributed leadership as concerted action through relationships allows for strong partnerships, which at the same time entails power disparities between the partners (Woods et al., 2004).

The lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of distributed leadership in promoting instructional improvement and increasing student achievement is considered a weakness (Spillane, 2006). Research conducted over the past 25 years has yielded the conclusion that

school leadership effects on student learning are largely indirect in nature. That is, leadership exercised by school principals operates through key organisational processes (Hallinger & Heck, 2009). However, similar empirical evidence concerning the effects of distributed leadership remains scarce (Marks & Printy, 2003). Descriptive theory building is essential before causal links between distributed leadership, instructional improvement and student outcomes can be established (Spillane, 2006).

### **2.3.5 The way forward**

The challenge of developing schools with the capacity for continuous improvement has led to a rapidly-emerging focus on fostering leadership at all levels of the education system (Lambert, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 2009). This is particularly evident in the advocacy of distributed leadership in schools among a broader set of key stakeholders, particularly teachers. Paradoxically, the latest thinking suggests that the drive to develop distributed leadership in schools neither diminishes nor comes at the expense of the principal's responsibilities for leadership. Distributed leadership and hierarchical forms of leadership are not necessarily incompatible (Woods, 2005). Distributed leadership is not meant to displace the crucial role of the school principal. In fact, for distributed leadership to come to full fruition, the structural framework that is provided by hierarchical forms of leadership is a prerequisite.

Distributed leadership theory is particularly helpful in providing greater conceptual clarity around the terrain of teacher leadership for three main reasons. Firstly, it incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals in a school who work at guiding and mobilising staff in the instructional change process (Spillane et al., 2001). Secondly, it implies a social distribution of leadership, where the leadership function is stretched over the work of a number of individuals, and where the leadership task is accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders (Spillane et al., 2001). Thirdly, it implies interdependency, rather than dependency, embracing the way in which leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility amongst themselves. There are also serious implications for leadership development. While the majority of investment continues to be for individuals in formal leadership roles (Bolden, 2007; Williams, 2011), a distributed perspective would argue for the development of leadership capacity throughout the organisation.

A sound research base is needed on which to assess the effectiveness of distributed leadership strategies in enhancing positive educational experiences, learning, and educational achievement (Woods et al., 2004).

## **2.4. Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leadership first gained prominence in the reform movement of the 1980s (York – Barr & Duke, 2004), during which time, teacher leaders were expected to take on leadership roles in the school. What is new now about teacher leadership is an “increased recognition of teacher leadership, visions of expanded teacher leadership roles, and new hope for the contributions these expanded roles might make in improving schools” (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Teacher leadership, as one of the manifestations of distributed leadership, refers to teachers who are “leaders within and outside the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and teacher leaders; influence others to improve their teaching practice; and accept responsibility for realising the goals of their leadership” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; 2009).

Teacher leadership is not about individual ‘teacher power,’ but about mobilising the capacity of teachers to strengthen student performance and develop real collaboration within the school (Patterson & Patterson, 2004). Teacher leadership is particularly important to a school’s success, as it implies a form of professional development and a view of the school as a learning community where teachers and students learn together (Harris and Muijs, 2002).

### **2.4.1 Definitions of teacher leadership**

There appears to be little agreement over the term teacher leadership in the broader literature, where definitions of teacher leadership are sometimes overlapping and competing (Harris, 2003). As York-Barr & Duke (2004) assert, the construct of teacher leadership is not well-defined conceptually or operationally. Harris and Lambert (2003) define teacher leadership as a model of leadership in which teaching staff at various levels within the organisation have the opportunity to lead. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) define teacher leaders as: “teachers who are leaders within and beyond the classroom, identify

with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice". Moreover, Grant (2006) defines teacher leadership as "leadership beyond headship or formal position, teachers become aware of and take up informal leadership roles both in the classroom and beyond. It includes teachers working collaboratively with all stakeholders towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust".

Patterson and Patterson (2004) define teacher leader as a teacher who works with colleagues for the purpose of improving teaching and learning, whether in a formal or informal capacity. Andrews and Crowther (2002) define teacher leadership as behaviour that facilitates principled pedagogical action toward whole-school success. It derives from the distinctive power of teaching to shape meaning for children, youth and adults and contributes to enhanced quality of community life in the long term.

Grant (2006) further describes the way in which teachers can lead within four zones; the classroom, working with other teachers in curricular and extra-curricular activities, leading in school-wide issues, and in whole-school development, and finally, by leading beyond the school into the community. Teacher leadership, Singh (2007) argues, offers a fundamental departure from the traditional understanding of school leadership associated with position, and she equates teacher leadership with agency, where teacher leadership is neither about role nor function. According to the author, teacher leaders fall into two categories, namely: formal teacher leaders, and informal teacher leaders. A number of different roles have been suggested for teacher leaders that provide a clearer definition and understanding of the term.

Teachers act as teacher leaders when they assist the school administration in carrying out operational tasks or by participating in decision-making (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996). An example of this is engaging in classroom observation (Harris & Muijs, 2005). One of the primary functions of teacher leaders is identified as their assistance in school administration (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996). Teacher leaders also promote collaborative activities with individual teachers, with the department, and even beyond the school (Barth, 1999). One way in which this is accomplished is by mentoring new teachers and student teachers (Lieberman et al., 1988). Another is acting as coaches for colleagues already established in

the profession. Teacher leaders' roles in collaboration also extend beyond the school when they work to establish relationships with parents and their community (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teacher leaders are also responsible for developing and improving instruction. They take part in making decisions, which shape the curriculum in a school (Barth, 1999) and help to develop and implement new instructional programmes (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Teacher leaders also engage in establishing standards for student behaviour and for school-wide classroom management policies (Barth, 1999). Finally, working on their own or as part of a team, teacher leaders engage in research and problem-solving activities designed to improve their schools (Lieberman et al., 1988). Teachers in leadership roles are also involved in collecting and analysing school-wide data for the purposes of generating solutions to extant problems.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) see teacher leadership as having three main facets: (1) leadership of students or other teachers; (2) leadership of operational tasks; and (3) leadership through decision making. Grant (2006), in her model of teacher leadership, identifies six roles: (1) continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching; (2) providing curriculum development knowledge; (3) leading in-service education and assisting other teachers; (4) participating in performance evaluation of teachers; (5) organising and leading peer reviews of school practice; and (6) participating in school level decision-making. Within the literature on teacher leadership, there is a divergence between those that see teacher leaders as collaborators with senior management, and those who see teacher leaders as fulfilling some of the functions of senior management, in part replacing them (Harris and Muijs, 2002).

As mentioned, teacher leadership is an emergent process, rather than something that can be achieved autocratically, and as has likewise been stressed, is centrally concerned with forms of empowerment and agency, which are also at the core of the distributed leadership theory (Harris, 2003). Teacher leadership is particularly important to a school's success. It implies a form of professional development and a view of the school as a learning community where teachers and students learn together (Harris and Muijs, 2002). Teacher leadership, Leithwood and Jantzi (1998) conclude, has far more impact on student learning

than on 'principal' leadership. These authors further assert that for better teacher effectiveness and student engagement, schools should distribute more of their leadership activity amongst their teachers.

The definition of what constitutes teacher leadership remains elusive, with a variety of meanings. York-Barr and Duke (2004) assert that there are different conceptions of what teacher leadership includes. These conceptions are grouped according to what teacher leaders do in their schools, with the authors acknowledging that roles have changed as school needs have changed. A common denominator of virtually every definition of teacher leadership is a foundation of collaboration. Collaboration among teachers influences conditions that shape teacher leadership; school culture, roles and relationships and structures are the three categories of conditions that affect teacher leadership (Wells et al., 2010). Unfortunately, teachers have not been trained in those skills and forms of knowledge that constitute the cornerstones of collaboration.

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

#### **2.4.2. Models of Teacher Leadership**

While there are a large number of leadership models available in the literature, the number specifically dedicated to teacher leadership are few. Smylie's (1992) framework to analyse teachers' willingness to participate in decision-making can be viewed as one of the earliest models of teacher leadership. In this model, Smylie (1992) examines the relationship between the four areas of decision making: (1) personnel; (2) curriculum and staff instruction; (3) staff development' and (4) general administration, and the following four factors: (1) the principal-teacher working relationship; (2) the norms that influence working relationships among teachers; (3) teachers' perceived capacity to contribute to decisions; and (4) the teachers' sense of responsibility and accountability in working with students.



Findings from this study indicated that the principal-teacher relationship was the greatest significant influence on the teachers' willingness to participate across all decision-making areas (Smylie, 1992).

Wallace, Nesbit and Miller (1999) offered six models of teacher leadership based on a continuum of two factors; the sphere of influence and the level of proactivity. The sphere of influence referred to whether leadership activities took place in the classroom, the school or at district level. Proactivity was defined as the lead teachers initiating the support of other teachers in bringing about school change (Wallace et al., 1999). The models consisted of descriptions of various leadership roles, including resource manager, school facilitator and instructional manager.

Riel and Becker (2008), in their research in teacher technology leadership, developed a model of teacher leadership practices which can be applied to general teacher leadership. Their pyramidal model consists of four levels moving from an informal teacher leader role to a more formal role. The levels consists of (1) learning from one's own teaching; (2) collaborating and sharing responsibility for student success; (3) participating in geographically diverse communities of practice; and (4) making personal contributions to the teaching profession.

In Grant's (2006) model, developed in a South African context, she suggests that teachers lead in four semi-distinct areas or 'zones': (1) in the classroom; (2) working with other teachers and learner outside the classroom in curricular and extra-curricular activities; (3) outside the school in whole school development; and (4) between neighbouring schools in the community. Within each of these zones, Grant (2006) further identifies six roles: (1) continuing to teach and improve one's own teaching; (2) providing curriculum development knowledge; (3) leading in-service education and assisting other teachers; (4) participating in performance evaluation of teachers; (5) organising and leading peer reviews of school practice; and (6) participating in school-level decision. This model is based on a qualitative study of eleven university tutors. However, only four of the eleven tutors investigated in the study were teachers, and a total of thirty-three journal entries among all the tutors constituted the primary data source.

### **2.4.3 Factors that facilitate teacher leadership**

Teacher leadership can emerge if the school puts in place the appropriate support mechanisms and creates the necessary internal conditions. Firstly, a culture of distributed leadership within the school (Grant, 2006), where teacher leaders are supported by the SMT and other teachers (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001). York-Barr and Duke (2004) suggest that infrastructure should be provided, opportunities should be created for teachers to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, learning communities should be built, and teacher expertise should be celebrated.

Secondly, collaboration and shared decision-making within a culture of mutual trust, support and enquiry (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership and to be effective it has to encompass mutual trust and support (Harris & Muijs, 2002). Opportunities should therefore be created within the school system to facilitate the development of these collaborative relationships. In this manner, all members of staff (formal and informal leaders) can collectively participate in the process of school and leadership development, take ownership of the school development plan, and realise their potential as educators and leaders (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011).

The literature is also clear about the role of the principal and school management team in relation to the promotion of teacher leadership. The role of those people in formal management positions is critical in enabling teacher leadership and creating opportunities for teachers to lead through the creation of a culture of collaboration, and by using the strengths and talents of the individual teachers. Finally, support from the SMT for teachers' professional development by providing time and resources for continuing professional development activities and by validating the concept of teacher leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2003). The task of the SMT becomes one of holding "the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship" (Harris and Muijs, 2005).

As teachers' roles continue to expand, a spotlight is cast on the roles of principals, who are in close proximity to the new sharing of leadership at the building level (Wells et al., 2010). Principals need to provide professional development opportunities to strengthen teachers' leadership skills. They also need to create professional learning communities that encourage inquiry, reflection and risk-taking (Patterson & Patterson, 2004). School leaders and

management teams create a climate in which distributed practices are either invited or hindered. It is therefore, recommended that school principals, school management teams and other leaders in schools are included in a process of capacity building and professional development in the area of distributed and democratic leadership practices (de Villiers & Pretorius, 2011).

Both the Department of Education and the education district have a significant role to play in the development of teacher leadership and the conditions that facilitate the development of teacher leadership in schools (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011). Superintendents and other staff in a school district can legitimise the efforts of developing teacher leadership by establishing appropriate policy and district culture and by being advocates for leadership (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001). As chief educational officers, the superintendents are the ones who optimise the conditions within the school district that can manifest conditions that support teacher leadership. They are also able to encourage principals to develop teacher growth in their schools, while providing incentives for the same.

In addition, the unique positioning of the principal, as a catalyst and mentor in developing teacher leaders, is directly influenced by the attitudes, behaviours and support generated by the Superintendent (Wells et al., 2010). The extent to which superintendents develop systems to support and encourage teacher leadership holds significant implications for the training of school superintendents, as well as for the development of successful collaborative leadership models within school districts. As roles for teacher leaders continue to evolve, so too do the roles of principals and superintendents.

#### **2.4.4 Barriers to teacher leadership**

In certain schools there are some inherent structural and cultural barriers to overcome in adopting teacher leadership. The most pervasive and difficult to overcome are relational, and involve the dynamics of the relationships between the teacher leaders and both their colleagues and their principal. Little (2002) found that teacher leadership in a school is dependent on whether the top-level administrators in a school are able to relinquish power to teacher leaders. Yet, the role of school management teams in developing teacher leadership, and how educators can lead beyond the classroom are not clarified (Singh,

2007). York-Barr and Duke (2004) further reported that “there is evidence to suggest that principal support of teacher leadership is more readily espoused than enacted.”

The top-down approaches to leadership and the internal school structures offer significant impediments to the development of teacher leadership. The current hierarchy of leadership within schools means that power resides with the leadership team (Harris, 2003; Grant, 2006 & Singh, 2007). In addition, research done by Grant and Khumalo (paper in progress) found that some SMTs proved themselves to be barriers to the development of teacher leadership. In addition, strong hierarchically-ordered, external accountability makes it risky for leaders to share leadership and management, as the leaders are in danger of being blamed for failure by school inspectors.

More importantly, teacher leaders must foster good relationships with the other teachers in the school for these are the ones they are expected to lead. However, teacher leadership roles may violate the norms of the teaching profession and place these relationships at risk (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Research by Lieberman et al. (1998) found that one of the main barriers perceived by teachers in leadership roles was the norm of equality among educators. Further, Duke et al. (1980) found that some teachers were suspicious of colleagues who identified too closely with the school authority structure. What was once congenial relationships may either be strained, or may be entirely lost as teachers take on leadership roles (Little, 1990; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Structural barriers, such as time and space, require either accommodation or adaptation for teacher leadership to prosper. The school’s architectural and organisational structures have been found to limit the effectiveness of teacher leaders (Fullan, 1994). Furthermore, the manner in which teachers are organised (be it by grade, team or subject) presents a significant barrier to teacher collaboration, which is a major component of teacher leadership (Harris & Muijs, 2005). The lack of time is often cited as one of the barriers to teacher leadership (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Taking on leadership roles is often done in addition to the teaching role that teachers fulfil. The time spent on leadership activities interferes with the time needed for students, and the time spent on classroom and other teacher responsibilities curtails their leadership efforts (Smylie & Denny, 1990). For most

teachers, the opportunity to engage in collaboration with other teachers is only available at the end of the day, when students have been dismissed.

There are also a number of personal barriers which influence teachers' decisions to take on leadership roles in a school. Teachers are accustomed to being leaders within their classrooms, and often perceive leadership roles outside the classroom as time-consuming and complicated. Even when teachers do take on leadership roles, they experience difficulty in switching between the roles of teacher and teacher leader. Teachers also experienced dissatisfaction when belonging to leadership teams involved in mundane decisions that do not directly influence their teaching practices (Smylie, 1992). Lastly, due to the cost of investing time and the small chance of reward, most teachers are not inclined to participate in school wide decision-making (Duke et al., 1980).

#### **2.4.5 The way forward**

An underlying assumption of teacher leadership is that teachers can lead the way for continuous improvement of teaching and learning, with increased student achievement (Wells et al., 2010). The findings of many studies over the last two decades have revealed a richness of benefits for teacher leadership that affects students, parents, schools, teacher colleagues and very importantly, teachers themselves (Muijs & Harris, 2003; York – Barr & Duke, 2004). These include the professionalisation of teaching; the strengthening of the school organisation; and the promotion of classroom and school improvement. Furthermore, The Teachers as Leaders Framework implies a correlation between teacher leadership and educational success (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). The concept of teacher leadership continues to evolve as external pressures grow for schools to perform with greater success and accountability (Wells et al., 2010).

However, it is important to note that teacher leadership is not without its limitations. The collective literature on teacher leadership is still predominantly descriptive, instead of explanatory, and studies have remained largely focused on leadership from formal leadership positions (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In addition, the construct of teacher leadership has not been clearly or concisely defined, either conceptually or operationally. This has resulted in dilemmas for empirical studies that would require teacher leadership to be defined in a way that makes quantification possible and meaningful (York – Barr & Duke,

2004). Furthermore, the literature on teacher leadership is characterised by argument and rationale, rather than with evidence of the effects on teacher leadership. While most of the existing research is limited to case study designs, small sample sizes and self-report interview methodologies (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The now single Department of Education promotes a shift from centralised control to collaborative decision-making of the schooling system in South Africa. This is evident in current educational policies such as (1) the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) which gives the principal representational powers on the governing body, (2) The Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (Department of Education, 1998) in which Whole School Evaluation is the responsibility of the SMT and (3) The National Education Policy Act (Department of Education, 1996) which gives schools and governing bodies the authority to manage their school fees.

Research conducted by De Villiers and Pretorius (2011) indicated that the teachers held positive assumptions about teacher leadership. Their findings also indicated that educators' preliminary leadership perceptions, assumptions about and readiness for teacher leadership proved that the majority of teachers are ready for a more distributed, deep, democratic leadership practice in schools. Educators acknowledged the need for professional development in the area of teacher leadership (De Villiers & Pretorius, 2011).

This finding is consistent with the findings of the Framework of Assumptions questionnaire, where educators in the education district indicated that they believe teachers can learn leadership skills through effective professional development. Planned, purposeful and systematic long-term professional development is the preferred approach. It is also consistent with findings as documented by York-Barr & Duke (2004) and Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002), where it was indicated that both formal leaders and teachers ought to be trained and prepared for teacher leadership.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a review of literature relevant to the current study. The review began with an overview of leadership and management as an essential step to

understanding the concepts of distributed leadership and teacher leadership. The theoretical framework underpinning my research, distributed leadership, was examined. The results were that distributed leadership moves beyond traditional leadership and is constituted through the interactions of leaders, followers and the situation (Spillane, 2006). Lastly, the literature review focuses on teacher leadership. This revealed a huge gap between the literature and what is displayed in South African schools today. If teacher leadership is to be developed in schools, a number conditions need to be in place. Principals need to embrace more democratic forms of leadership, and distributed leadership in particular. SMTs need to understand and embrace the significant role they play in the development of teacher leadership, and in addition, there needs to be the appropriate structures in place for support, mentorship, time for collaboration, trust, teamwork and focused teacher development programmes.

The next chapter details and discusses the study methodology.