

## **ABSTRACT**

The area of teacher leadership (what it means to be a teacher leader) has been an area of personal interest for many years. Teacher leadership has great scope, as the role of a teacher includes many responsibilities (from teaching to learning to social responsibility) and can be vital in the transformation of South African schools. Given the opportunity to explore this topic and its meaning in the South African context, it was imperative to contribute to investigating this concept.

The purpose of this study was to explore teacher leadership: the possibilities that teacher leaders face when developing themselves, the challenges that they may face and how SMTs, principals, deputy principals and HODs view teacher leadership. This study was conducted in a select public school in the Johannesburg North district. The aim of this study is to understand to how extent teacher leaders may be empowered and/or limited due to the various challenges and possibilities that they face.

This study explored the deputy principal's, HODs', and teachers' conceptualisations, experiences, and enactment of teacher leadership within the select school and how this potentially represents teacher leadership in the South African context. The literature review examined relevant literature pertaining to leadership, teacher leadership, different types of leadership, the roles and responsibilities of teachers and social justice in relation to education. Furthermore, two teacher leadership frameworks were discussed to demonstrate the expectations of teacher leaders and to serve as a guideline for what constitutes teacher leaders. This study used the qualitative approach and employed the critical paradigm. Empirical data was generated by means of semi-structured interviews, which were then analysed through the narrative research design/analysis.

The findings demonstrate that teacher leaders encounter a fair share of both possibilities and challenges, and that teacher leadership should be encouraged to empower teachers at all levels and in all aspects. The key finding is that school leadership has the means to empower and support teachers and thus, limits may often be due to external challenges. The findings are presented, and recommendations are made to encourage schools to learn more and engage with teacher leadership.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Teacher leadership, Empowerment, Possibilities, Challenges