

# Saudi English-Language Teachers' Perceptions and Reported Practices of Teacher Leadership

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Submitted by

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## Abstract

This interpretive study explored how Saudi Arabian nationals employed as English-language teachers within intermediate and secondary Saudi schools understand the concept of teacher leadership, and how they perceive themselves as teacher leaders. The study also explored teachers' views of current factors that empower or disempower them in being teacher leaders, as well as the roles and support they desire. The research used an exploratory design methodology encompassing three qualitative research methods: focus groups, one-to-one semi-structured interviews and reflective essays. The participants included nine Saudi English-language teachers from intermediate and secondary public schools. Participants were able to define teacher leadership in relation to: practices inside the classroom, practices outside the classroom and teacher knowledge and professionalism. The participants also perceived themselves as teacher leaders with potential professional capital that would allow them to engage and participate professionally in their school community of practice. The data revealed that teacher leadership is not the general practice in Saudi public schools; however, participants reported practices of teacher leadership that they desired and aspired to. The study also reported the many barriers to teacher leadership that currently exist, such as lack of teacher leadership roles, lack of support from the heavily centralised educational hierarchy, insufficient and inadequate pre-service and in-service training, and lack of voice in decision-making processes. Despite these barriers, the participants were eager to act in teacher leadership roles because they believe these roles carry benefits for themselves, their colleagues, headteachers, curricula and students. Based on the data obtained in the research, the study proposed a model for "professional teacher leadership" that supports

teacher leaders as professionals who have professional capital to work with professional agency and autonomy in a positive atmosphere of communities of practice. This model could have benefits if applied in the context of Saudi Arabia and would be transferrable to similar contexts globally. The study concluded with some theoretical and practical recommendations for the Ministry of Education and for teachers in regards to teacher leadership within Saudi Arabia. Through teacher perception and reported experiences, TESOL teachers can challenge policy and provide a basis for developing new ways emerging from them in the context, as in-depth perspectives can give a voice to participants.

Based on the literature reviewed and the design of the current research with its underpinning theoretical and conceptual frameworks, additional pathways are suggested for future research.

## Dedication

I dedicate this academic work with all its words and meaning

to my first teacher and mentor, my beloved mother.

She was always behind and in front of me during my masters and doctoral studies,

travelling with me to the UK.

May God forgive her and give peace to her in paradise.

And may this gift endow her and be her legacy.

أهدي هذا العمل

إلى مناي ورضاي وسعادتي

إلى سر نجاحي وبحر عطائي

إلى نبع إبداعي ونبض فؤادي

إلى نور عيوني ومبتغى أعمالي

إلى من لا تكفيها كلمات الدنيا ولا ينقطع عنها دعاء الآخرة

إلى والدتي الغالية نعمة حياتي

ونجاحي مطلبها

ثمراتي جهدها

وتميزي دعاءها

إخلاصي منبعها

إلهي اغفر لها وارحمها وارفع درجاتها وأكرم نزلها بروية وجهك الكريم في الجنة، واجعل هذا البحث خالصاً لك ثم سبيلاً لوالدتي ووالدي وأجراً غير منقطع عنهما..

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# Contents

Abstract .....	2
Dedication .....	4
Acknowledgments .....	5
Contents .....	8
List of Figures .....	12
List of Tables.....	13
Abbreviations .....	14
Chapter One: Introduction .....	15
1.1 Background of the Research .....	15
1.2 Overview of the research problem .....	18
1.3 Research aims and questions.....	21
1.4 Rationale for the research.....	22
1.5 Significance of the research .....	24
1.6 Overview of the thesis.....	27
Chapter 2: Context of the Research .....	29
2.1 Country overview .....	29
2.2 An Overview of Education in KSA.....	31
2.3 English-Language in the Saudi Education: teaching and teachers' status .....	35
2.4 Teachers' roles in decision-making processes.....	39
2.5 Educational leadership in Saudi public schools.....	40
2.6 Summary .....	44
Chapter Three: Literature Review .....	46
3.1 Leadership in Educational Institutions .....	47
3.2 The construct of teacher leadership .....	50
3.3 Development of Teacher Leadership .....	54
3.4 Theories underpinning teacher leadership: Theoretical Framework .....	58
3.5 Teacher Leadership Skills .....	63
3.6 Teacher leaderships roles.....	65
3.7 Benefits of Teacher Leadership.....	68
3.7.1 Teachers' agency and empowerment.....	69
3.7.2 Teacher Development and Professionalism.....	70
3.7.3 Collegiality and professional collaboration .....	71
3.7.4 Collaborative school leadership .....	73

3.7.5 Curriculum improvement .....	74
3.7.6 Students' overall achievements .....	75
3.8 Barriers to and Supports of Teacher Leadership.....	76
3.8.1 Teachers' Beliefs.....	77
3.8.2 Colleagues and Peers .....	78
3.8.3 Training and Professional Development .....	80
3.8.4 Educational Policy .....	81
3.8.5 School Headteachers.....	83
3.8.6 School Culture .....	85
3.8.7 Promotion and Rewards.....	87
3.8.8 Work Overload .....	88
3.9 Previous studies related to the research topic .....	89
3.10 Research Conceptual framework .....	96
3.11 Summary .....	98
Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology .....	101
4.1 Paradigmatic and methodological standpoints .....	101
4.2 Data collection methods .....	106
4.2.1 Focus Groups.....	107
4.2.2 Semi-structured interview .....	109
4.2.3 Reflective essays.....	110
4.3 Trialling the data collection methods.....	111
4.4 Research Setting and participants.....	112
4.5 Data analysis.....	115
4.6 Research Quality Assurance .....	118
4.7 Research ethics.....	121
4.8 Summary .....	122
Chapter Five: Research Findings .....	124
5.1 Understanding the concept of teacher leadership .....	125
5.1.1 Teacher Leadership in Relation to Practices inside the Classroom.....	126
5.1.2 Teacher leadership in relation to practices beyond the classroom .....	130
5.1.3 Teacher knowledge and professionalism.....	133
5.2 Current and Desired Practices and roles of Teacher Leadership .....	136
5.2.1 Teacher leadership roles inside the classroom .....	137
5.2.2 Teacher Leadership Roles outside the Classroom.....	139
5.3 Teachers' Understanding of themselves as Teacher Leaders .....	143

5.3.1 Personal Skills .....	143
5.3.2 Professional and social skills .....	146
5.3.3 Decisional skills.....	149
5.4 Factors enabling or disempowering teacher leadership practices .....	153
5.4.1 Role recognition and clarity .....	153
5.4.2 Support and guidance .....	155
5.4.3 Training and professional development .....	159
5.4.4 Teachers' Influence and Empowerment .....	162
5.4.5 School Culture .....	166
5.5 Teachers' desires to act as teacher leaders .....	170
5.5.1 Teacher leadership benefits to themselves .....	173
5.5.2 Teacher leadership benefits to colleagues.....	175
5.5.3 Teacher leadership benefits to the headteachers .....	178
5.5.4 Teacher leadership benefits to the curriculum.....	180
5.5.5 Teacher Leadership benefits to Students.....	181
5.6 Summary .....	183
Chapter 6: Discussion .....	184
6.1 Understanding the concept of teacher leadership .....	184
6.1.1 Teacher Leadership inside the classroom .....	185
6.1.2 Teacher leadership outside the classroom .....	187
6.1.3 Teacher knowledge and Professionalism.....	189
6.2 Current and Desired Practices and roles of Teacher Leadership .....	192
6.2.1 Leadership roles inside the classroom:.....	192
6.2.2 Teacher Leader Roles outside the Classroom .....	193
6.3 Teachers' Understanding of themselves as Teacher Leaders .....	195
6.3.1 Personal Skills.....	195
6.3.2 Professional and Social Skills.....	197
6.3.3 Decisional Skills .....	198
6.4 Factors enabling or disempowering teacher leadership practices .....	200
6.4.1 Role recognition and clarity .....	201
6.4.2. Support and Guidance.....	202
6.4.3 Training and professional development .....	204
6.4.4 Teachers' Influence and Empowerment .....	207
6.4.5 School Culture .....	209
6.5 Teachers' desires to act as teacher leaders .....	211

6.5.1 Teacher leadership benefits to themselves .....	211
6.5.2 Teacher leadership benefits to colleagues.....	212
6.5.3 Teacher leadership benefits to Headteachers .....	213
6.5.4 Teacher leadership benefits to the curriculum.....	214
6.5.5 Teacher leadership benefits to students.....	214
6.6 Summary of the chapter .....	217
Chapter 7: Conclusion .....	220
7.1 Summary of Main Findings and Discussion.....	220
7.2 Proposed Teacher Leadership Model .....	223
7.3 Recommendations .....	226
7.3.1 Recommendations for teachers.....	227
7.3.2 Recommendations for policy makers in MoE and universities.....	228
7.4 Research Contributions to Knowledge.....	234
7.5 Limitations of the Study .....	237
7.6 Suggestions for Further Research .....	239
7.7 Personal Reflection on the Thesis Journey .....	241
Appendix A: Example Questions for Focus Group .....	243
Appendix B: Sample Questions for Interviews.....	244
Appendix C: Instructions for Reflective Essay .....	245
Appendix D: An Example from Focus Group .....	246
Appendix E: An Example from the Interview .....	249
Appendix F: An Example Reflective Essay .....	252
Appendix G: Certificate of Ethical Research Approval .....	253
Appendix H: Participant Letter.....	256
Appendix I: Participant’s Consent Form.....	257
A consent form to apply the study in Alleith Educational Directorate .....	258
Appendix J: Example of Nvivo Data Analysis.....	259
Bibliography .....	261

# List of Figures

Figure 1: The significance of teacher leadership for the Saudi context.....	26
Figure 2: Map of Saudi Arabia .....	30
Figure 3: Teacher Leadership Underpinning Theories: Theoretical Framework.....	58
Figure 4: Sequential Phases of Data Collection .....	106
Figure 5: Areas of the Participants' Understanding of Teacher Leadership .....	126
Figure 6: Teacher Leadership Benefits.....	172
Figure 7: Summary of the Research Findings .....	221
Figure 8: Proposed Model "Professional Teacher Leadership" .....	224

# List of Tables

Table 1: Population of Education Directorate.....	113
Table 2: Participants' Details.....	114
Table 3: Summary of the Data Collected.....	115
Table 4: Practices inside the Classroom.....	127
Table 5: Practices beyond the Classroom.....	131
Table 6: Teachers' Knowledge and Professionalism.....	134
Table 7: Teacher Leadership Roles inside the Classroom.....	137
Table 8: Teacher Leadership Roles Outside the Classroom.....	140
Table 9: Personal Skills.....	144
Table 10: Professional and Social skills.....	147
Table 11: Decisional Skills.....	150
Table 12: Role recognition and clarity.....	154
Table 13: Guidance and Support.....	156
Table 14: Training and Professional Development.....	159
Table 15: Teacher's Influence and Empowerment.....	163
Table 16: School Culture.....	167
Table 17: Teacher leadership benefits to Themselves.....	173
Table 18: Teacher leadership benefits to colleagues.....	176
Table 19: Teacher leadership benefits to Headteachers.....	178
Table 20: Teacher leadership benefits to Curriculum.....	180
Table 21: Teacher leadership benefits to Students.....	182

## Abbreviations

<b>BREA</b>	British Research Ethics Association
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>FG</b>	Focus Group
<b>Int</b>	Interview
<b>KSA</b>	The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<b>MoE</b>	The Ministry of Education
<b>MoHE</b>	Ministry of Higher Education
<b>PEEC</b>	Public Education Evaluation Commission
<b>RE</b>	Reflective Essay
<b>Tatweer</b>	King Abdullah Project for General Education Development
<b>TESOL</b>	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the Research

In today's competitive globalized societies, educational systems in general, and schools in particular, are increasingly under scrutiny, being judged with respect to their successes and failures of achieving the goals of teaching and learning. Such scrutiny tends to be particularly prevalent when a society is undergoing rapid development, as is the case in Saudi Arabia. Schools which had been successful in fulfilling their roles twenty years ago could not necessarily continue their success in the same manner today. Because of this, schools are required to respond to the various developments in the fields of education and educational leadership. In many cases they need to expand the sources of change from a top-down structure to a more widely empowered leadership model, whereby teachers are viewed as agents of change in school development (Muijs & Harris, 2006). Reflecting the unique position of teachers as interpreters and deliverers of policy, educationalists have begun to consider the role of teachers as extending beyond the limited classroom context, to include their professional capacity and qualities in the professional learning and practice of themselves and others in the school, and how these can be built up and harnessed (Hargreaves, 2001; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

In the classroom, a teacher is bound by the challenges posed in the daily routine of teaching: curricula criteria, class management, student assessment and discipline (Muijs & Harris, 2007; Bangs and Frost, 2012). These prescribed roles, combined with the traditional managerial roles associated with teaching, constitute the actual teaching competency. Teachers who are bound only to classroom activities are not necessarily empowered to develop their teaching practices or to



take part in school reform, and these limitations could have a negative impact on the overall quality of students' learning in the classroom (Muijs and Harris, 2006). This thesis argues against such limited roles of teachers whether inside or beyond their classrooms, as undoubtedly teachers have a significant role to play in implementing educational policy inside and beyond their classrooms. In this regard, Muijs and Harris (2006) argue, "where individuals feel confident in their own capacity, in the capacity of their colleagues and in the capacity of the school to promote professional development, school improvement is more likely to be achieved" (p.961).

Many current school reforms and research recommend that teachers should be included as change leaders, by building their leadership capacity (Bento, 2011). In countries ranked top in education, ministries of education are usually seen to share education policy-making and modes of delivery with teachers. There is growing interest in the empowerment of teachers and in recent years a growing number of studies have pointed to the highly beneficial effects of teachers' empowerment upon schools and students (Dove et al., 2010; Bangs and frost, 2012; Riveros et al., 2013; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015). This capacity building helps teachers to provide support and collaboration in the overall improvement of the school (Ash & Persall, 2000; Danielson, 2006). Significantly, Mayo (2002) asserted that "school change and improvement cannot successfully occur without teacher leaders, and teacher leadership is essential for raising the level of professionalism within the teacher profession itself" (p. 29). Teacher leadership means teachers' involvement and engagement in the process of school development, their own and colleagues' professional development, and their students' learning. The concept has evolved in as a model that gives empowerment to teachers to act in leadership roles, creating a paradigm shift in

school leadership, from centralized, top-down policies and individual leadership towards decentralized and collective leadership (Mangin, 2007). Teacher leadership, as the current research argues, treats teachers as professionals with potential professional agency that helps them to act professionally in their teaching skills and learning strategies, to the benefit of school development (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; O'Brien, 2005, 2007; Harris & Muijs, 2006; Wright, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Thus, educationalists have begun to think of extending the role of teachers beyond the limited context of the classroom in order to build their professional self and collective efficacy. Hoy (2000) defines teacher's efficacy as "teachers' confidence in their ability to promote students' learning" (p.2), incorporating involvement beyond the classroom. This recognition comes through the acknowledgment of teacher leadership as an important factor in school improvement, by enabling teachers and motivating them to develop their professional capitals in their teaching techniques, which in turn facilitates the processes of students' learning and contributes to overall school development. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) defines professional capital of teachers as the individual and collective professional capacity teachers have potentially in their teaching and learning that requires both professional knowledge and professional practice to maximise and develop. This thesis argues that teachers occupy an exceptional position in the school development through their professional capital in the development of educational systems and achievement of educational objectives. Offering empowering roles to teachers indeed "implies a redistribution of power and a re-alignment of authority within the organization" (Muijs & Harris, 2006, p.961). This empowerment for teachers creates a culture wherein they can participate and engage in the school's development as a professional community of practice

(CoP) (Wenger & Snyder, 2002). Therefore, building the school as a CoP requires a change from being dependent on individual headteachers to developing the collective capacity of teachers by maximizing their professional capacity. The development of this kind of school culture requires not only a structure within the school to support it, but the understanding amongst teachers of what is expected of them and what they are capable of achieving autonomously as teacher leaders, as this thesis aimed to explore.

Several studies have looked at teacher leadership from different angles and in different context; this study contributes to the literature reviewed by filling a gap in current knowledge about teacher leadership in the Saudi context, and through its use of professional capital, communities of practice, professional agency and autonomy, which framework has thus far been underutilised in the research area of teacher leadership, as will be shown in Chapter 3, section 3.9.

## **1.2 Overview of the research problem**

The Saudi public education system has witnessed several developmental initiatives towards the modernization of education, pedagogy, management and leadership. For example, in May 2014, King Abdullah approved a five-year plan for the reform of the education sector (King Abdullah Project for General Education Development, Tatweer), and a number of developments in education have continued with the accession of King Salman to the Saudi throne in 2015. In 2016, his Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman declared the Saudi Vision 2030, which envisages education as contributing to the country's economic growth (Saudi Vision 2030 website, 2016).

Although the above reforms are taking place (reforms will be discussed further in Chapter 2), the success of teachers in Saudi Arabia continues to be based on their

response to the directives of centralised educational leadership, their adherence to rules and regulations, their interaction with the orders and directives of the school headteachers, and their implementation of educational supervisors' instructions (Albedaiwi, 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alrahidi & Phan, 2015; Alasmari, 2016). Saudi TESOL teachers were not regarded by MoE as professionals but remain dependent on their headteachers and supervisors for expertise in materials, development needs and teaching approaches (Alsalahi, 2014). They are subject to strict guidelines where step-by-step programmes were expected to be followed, and every teacher is shaped to be similar to others, regardless of contextual and individual differences. The country's top-down policy and centralised educational system treat teachers, TESOL teachers among them, as passive, leaving educational development and decision-making processes in the hands of the officials in the Ministry of Education (MoE) and those in the different educational directorates around the Kingdom (Alnefaie, 2016). The above research has indicated that the top-down policy approach, along with the dependence of the school development plan on headteachers in schools as the main change figures, has minimised the roles of teachers in future educational change, as the data in this study will seek to underline.

As a consequence of these circumstances, discussed more fully in Chapter 2, in the Saudi context most of the teachers, have no voice in educational affairs (Mullick, 2014). Teachers' professional roles in school development are still not considered in the implementation of reforms, nor are they consulted in the change process as research indicated. Centralist structures within the educational systems dictate change through command-and-control methods, diminishing teachers' agency and excluding teachers from reform initiatives (Al-Seghayer, 2014). Based on the above, it will be argued that 'top-down', non-teacher inclusive reforms,

however, are limited in creating a long-lasting impact on the continuing initiatives of the MoE (Alkrdem, 2011; Arabai, 2014). This thesis supports the assertion that building teachers' capacity needs to be part of the current reforms, initiatives and activities in Saudi public education.

Although this thesis has identified a serious lack of studies about its theme and specific context, considerable research about teacher leadership has been conducted in other countries, including Australia (O'Brien, 2007), Canada (Riveros et al., 2013), China (Zhang et al., 2013), UK (Muijs & Harris, 2007; Bangs and Forest, 2012), and the USA (Mackenzie & Angelle, 2013). They largely concentrated on and emphasized the importance of teachers' roles as teacher leaders in school development, their professional learning and students' learning through their involvement and engagement in the process of school life.

However, in the context of Saudi public schools the current research could be the first as Sayyed (2014) rightly points out, "there is a lack of literature on teacher empowerment and the effectiveness of educational leadership within a TESOL framework in Saudi Arabia" (p.9). Given this need, as well as the lack of previous studies set in the country generally, a better understanding of the nature of teacher leadership is needed in the context of Saudi public education. It is also important to understand how the culture of a school can build teacher leadership capacity, bearing in mind the inherent constraints within the current Saudi educational context.

As well as providing an opportunity for sharing and analysing English-language teachers' voices, this study is a timely attempt to bridge two gaps in current knowledge. Firstly, although previous small-scale studies have focused on problems and future possibilities of teachers' empowerment in the specific context

of Saudi Arabia (e.g. Alsalahi, 2014; Shah, 2014), the current research takes the view that understanding how English-language teachers experience their professional practice and envision the scope of their teacher leadership roles can be highly illuminative for devising future directions for its policy and practice in KSA. Secondly, this study attempts to formulate a theoretical framework that promotes a contextually-appropriate approach to teacher leadership. It combines key notions such as communities of practice, professional capital, agency and empowerment (see Chapter 3 section 3.4). The most suitable ways to blend and convey these approaches in the context of Saudi Arabia and globally will be explored.

The research problem and the gaps in the literature will be addressed through appropriately designed research aims and questions, as detailed below.

### **1.3 Research aims and questions**

This exploratory research aimed to explore how Saudi Arabian nationals who are employed as intermediate and secondary English-language teachers within Saudi Arabian public schools understand the concept of teacher leadership and how they perceive themselves as teacher leaders. It also explored views on the current and desired practices of teacher leadership in their context. The factors that empower or disempower teachers to be teacher leaders were discussed.

The following research questions were addressed in order to explore the specific themes and context that shape this study:

1. How do Saudi English-language teachers in intermediate and secondary public schools perceive the concept of teacher leadership?

2. What are the current and desired practices of teacher leadership in intermediate and secondary Saudi public schools?
3. How do Saudi English-language teachers in intermediate and secondary public schools perceive themselves as teacher leaders?
4. What factors might enable or disempower Saudi English-language teachers in intermediate and secondary public schools to be teacher leaders?
5. To what extent do Saudi English-language teachers want to take on teacher leadership roles in their intermediate and secondary public schools?

By addressing these questions, a potential link will be explored between teachers' ability to act as teacher leaders and the professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) with which they were endowed.

#### **1.4 Rationale for the research**

Reflecting on my own experience as a Saudi English-language teacher and the expanded understanding of the importance of teachers' empowerment in education helped me to begin to visualise how teacher leadership could be developed in schools. I experienced for myself that the classroom is the only territory where teachers can develop their professional competence – and even then with limitations on what and how we can teach – following the MoE curricula and guidelines. I noticed that we teachers tended to depend upon headteachers and senior supervisors to develop our teaching styles and strategies. We saw ourselves as looked down upon by others in our works, disempowered and this affected our agency. In addition to my own reflections and insights on teacher leadership in the Saudi context, the current research was also inspired and guided by my colleagues whom I met during my visits to schools. It was through this

experience and the insights I gained through reflection that I developed the idea of conducting research on teachers' understandings of teacher leadership as an area that empowers us to take the lead and develop our professional capital in its different formal and informal roles.

The EdD course in my doctoral study at Exeter University has shaped my understanding and significantly influenced the references that I have studied. A book by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) entitled *Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Leadership Development for Teachers*, influenced my thinking about the area of the research. Among its principles are the following:

1. All teachers are expected to engage in leadership activities.
2. Leadership includes both the formal and informal functions that occur within the school.
3. The primary focus of teacher leadership is teaching and learning.
4. Teacher leaders accept both the opportunities and responsibilities that come with leadership. Teacher leaders hold themselves accountable for student learning.

Thereafter, I conducted a small-scale study into "Challenges of Teacher Leadership in a Saudi School: Why Are Teachers Not Leaders?" (Alsalahi, 2014). The results of my study prompted me to undertake this current research to gain more-in-depth understandings of the issues. Whilst exploring issues of teacher leadership in Saudi Arabia I raised my own awareness of the professional capital that teachers can be empowered to attain as the study revealed Saudi-English language teachers' eagerness to act as teacher leaders in their profession.



Moreover, the gaps in the identified reviewed literature about the paucity of research conducting in KSA about teacher leadership helped me to undertake the current research, and the gap in literature about the underpinning theoretical framework as discussed in 1.2 influenced its design

Finally, the level of professionalization that I hope teachers in Saudi Arabia are able to reach through a change of leadership culture – a change that the findings of this thesis hope to ignite – is a rationale that required in-depth research into teachers' roles and their views thereon in KSA. The current educational leadership and the accountability model of the centralized policy militate against the building up of professional capital and that teachers need to maximize their professional engagement in the different school activities. The critical importance of teachers' professional knowledge, professional engagement and professional practice inside their classrooms and beyond to the development of school reforms is increasingly recognised in the literature (Borg, 2005). Teachers' stories, views and practices need to be told and listened to so, that an in-depth understanding of the current state of their professional capital can be established. Slater (2008) mentioned that teacher leadership is best researched if teachers are the ones to be examined about the phenomenon. Therefore, listening to the professional agents of change, Saudi TESOL teachers in this thesis, would impact positively on the desired change of the Saudi Vision 2030.

## **1.5 Significance of the research**

Many studies have investigated teacher leadership in various contexts, as discussed above. However, this research addresses a gap in the literature as it is, to my knowledge, the first to explore the views of Saudi English-language teachers in public schools about teacher leadership in KSA. It is important to know their

perspectives in order to explore the related concerns and issues of teacher leadership concepts and practices. The research attempts to provide a knowledge base of how teacher leadership is viewed by Saudi TESOL professionals in public schools. It is necessary to discover how English language teachers constructed the concept of teacher leadership by better understanding how Saudi TESOL practitioners construct themselves as legitimate professional teacher leaders. Included in this part of the study are enquiries into the factors that enhance or impede their empowerment as professional teacher leaders. By doing so, the study provides empirical evidence that will spark a debate in the Saudi context about how teacher leadership may be given more serious consideration and prominence.

Therefore, this research adds to the knowledge base of teaching and teacher leadership in a number of ways. It presents an exploration of the views of TESOL teachers in public schools in Saudi Arabia, to illuminate the current understanding of their leadership, as their views are still under-researched and under-represented in TESOL studies. The research provides the participants with a platform to reflect and think about their current and desired teacher leadership roles. The possibility that these teachers as agentive legitimate stakeholders could contribute to school improvement in significant ways is of direct relevance and challenges the widely-held assumption in KSA and other contexts that teachers are passive and cannot act beyond their classrooms.

The current research aimed to provide evidence for educators, teachers and policy makers in line with the Saudi Vision 2030, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, for ways, rules and roles to encourage teachers to practise their professional capital, professional learning and professional practice in teacher leadership roles.

Additionally, teachers who have the desire to lead might better understand the different roles of teacher leadership and the factors that encourage them to lead within and beyond their classrooms to enact change in their school development, their professional learning, their colleagues' development and their students' achievements (see Figure.1)

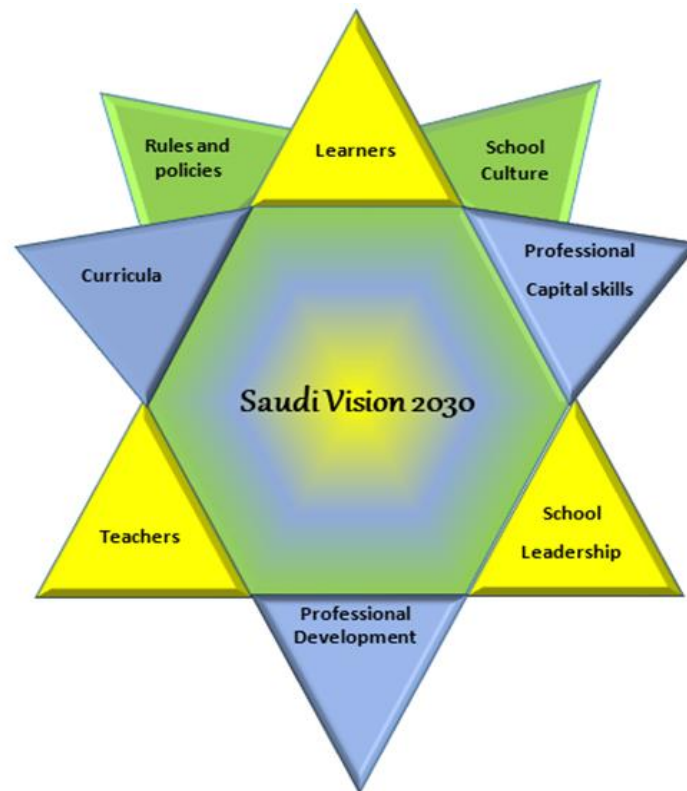


Figure 1: The significance of teacher leadership for the Saudi context

Investigating teachers' views and listening to their voices about their reported practices of leadership is one of the contributions of this research to the field of teacher leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia, and in similar contexts globally, in the area of TESOL. Consequently, from the lived experiences of TESOL teachers we may learn, develop our skills as effective teacher leaders, and take on some expanded leadership roles that should prove invaluable in our professional journeys and may be used to enrich school improvement strategies. These findings aim to contribute to the policies of the MoE, encouraging them to value

the potential of their teachers to be key figures in the 2030 Saudi Vision, and to develop pre-service teacher education and in-service training in relation to teacher leadership. Although the findings may be limited to the teachers participating in the research, it could be argued that they could yield deep understandings and thoughtful insights about teacher leadership capital in the wider Saudi context.

This research also makes a theoretical contribution through its adoption of Professional Capital Theory (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2004) and CoPs (Wenger & Snyder, 2002) as the theoretical framework in a study of teacher leadership, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, section 3.4. Finally, the research intends to develop a contextually-appropriate model, namely “professional teacher leadership” which will be based on professionalism as an integral part of teachers’ work beside their classroom teaching and learning, underpinned by other relevant reviewed literature. Having elicited respondents’ views through qualitative research methods, it is hoped that sufficient understandings will be gained so that significant and informed recommendations can be offered.

## **1.6 Overview of the thesis**

Chapter One has presented the research problem, rationale, significance and aims of the research. It has set the scene for the whole thesis by giving an account of the background and the context from which the research topic emerged, and formulated the research questions. In Chapter Two, further information about the context of the research will be given. Chapter Three will then provide an overview of related literature about teacher leadership and its development as a concept, as well as discussing previous research into teacher leadership in practice in relation to the theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning the research. Chapter Four will address the research design. The research paradigm, ontological

assumptions, epistemological assumptions and methodology will also be presented in this chapter, and the methods and procedures of data collection and analysis described. In addition, the research ethics, limitations and issues of credibility and trustworthiness will be discussed. In Chapter Five, the findings will be presented, followed by their discussion in Chapter Six. Finally, Chapter Seven will present the proposed model, the research contribution and discuss some implications and recommendations, as well as giving suggestions for further research.

## Chapter 2: Context of the Research

The context in which this research takes place affects the views and practices of teachers about teacher leadership, because the school community has to function within the contextual and cultural framework of its country. This chapter describes the environment of the study by describing the context of Saudi Arabia, specifically in relation to its education system. A brief background to the context of the study will be presented, outlining the past, present and foreseeable future of the Saudi education. First, it presents an overview of Saudi Arabia, its culture, religion and educational system. Second, the government's education policy is discussed and the organization of the education system is described, followed by an outline of school rules and school leadership. All of the above will be considered in relation to the current situation of education in the country and the educational reforms presently being carried out in the area of Saudi TESOL teachers.

### 2.1 Country overview

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, located within the Arabian Peninsula, became a kingdom in 1932. Its geographical position connects the land between the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The country covers an area of 2,250,000 square kilometres, with large distances separating its major cities from each other. Geographically, the country is composed of thirteen provinces, which are divided into forty-three directorates and governorates (Figure 2). This is one factor to consider, as the current research argues, relating to the importance of career stability (for teachers and others), given the need to travel to work every day.



Figure 2: Map of Saudi Arabia

Significantly, approximately 50% of the population of 31 million are under the age of 20 (General Authority for Statistics, 2016). The high proportion of the population who are children or young adults preparing to enter or already enrolled in education has led the MoE to establish many public schools all around the kingdom (discussed further in section 2.2).

It is also important to know the economic context of Saudi Arabia and how this affects its educational policy and education stakeholders. The position of Saudi Arabia as a leader among the 20 OPEC countries has helped it to modernize its cities, systems and policies dramatically. The Saudi government has issued a succession of Five-Year plans, of which nine have been completed and the tenth is underway, running from 2015 to 2019. Each plan aims to achieve specific goals for human resources, promoting economic, social and educational transformation. The tenth five-year plan has renewed emphasis on education, and strives for Saudi society to become educated and knowledgeable: “the first five years of the 10th Development Plan mark the start of the 15-year transformation of the Saudi

economy into a knowledge economy” (General Authority for Statistics, 2016). Furthermore, in 2016 the government launched its 2030 Vision Plan to transform the country from an oil-based economy to a non-oil dependent one in all its sectors. In recent years, modernization has facilitated growth and progress in many areas of Saudi life, including education.

In Saudi social life, Islam is the only religion in the kingdom and Arabic is the spoken and official language of daily life. It is particularly important, given these considerations, to understand the high status that education has in Islam, that is, to understand its place in relation to the importance of religious belief and practice, and how these fundamental aspects affect the composition and formation of the aims and objectives of education in Saudi Arabia “where the sharia (Islamic holy law) serves as both constitution and legal framework” (Alfahadi, 2012, p.31).

## **2.2 An Overview of Education in KSA**

Education in Saudi Arabia is governed and controlled by the Ministry of Education, which was established in 1954 and provides public education free of charge to every citizen. There used to be two ministries responsible for education, The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), until 29th January 2015 when the new king, the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Salman, decided to merge the two ministries under the name of the Ministry of Education.

Public educational policy is derived from and based on the founding principles of Islam to seek knowledge and education. An example of how educational policy is underpinned by Islam is the following objective of education issued by the Ministry of Education:



The objective of education: understanding Islam correctly and completely, implanting and spreading the Islamic doctrine, providing students with Islamic values and instructions, acquiring knowledge along with different skills, developing constructive behavioural tendencies; advancing society economically, socially, culturally, and qualifying members in order to become useful in the construction of their society. (Educational policy article 28, MoE, 1976, cited in Al-Sunbul et al, 2004)

Education is therefore designed in both structure and content in accordance with these principles, and the prevalent interpretation of Islamic rules. For example, co-education of girls and boys does not exist. The genders are strictly segregated in every way, including the use of separate school buildings and teaching staff.

The context of Saudi Arabia significantly affects the ways leadership and decision-making operate, being a centralized and culturally constrained educational system. The system is centrally administered by the Ministry of Education and additionally comprises 43 district offices in 13 administrative regions. Alshumaimeri (2001) notes: "All educational policies are subject to government control and supervision by the Supreme Council of Education. Curricula, syllabuses and textbooks are uniform throughout the Kingdom" (p.17). The MoE is responsible for policy-making, planning, staffing, providing materials for schools, and building the curricula, so that all public schools have the same materials, teaching and supervision, evaluation techniques and educational policy (Al-Seghayer, 2014).

Both public and higher education provide free education for all students, from kindergarten to university level. In public education, there are 7.45 million students enrolled in the KSA education system, in separate boys' and girls' schools (General Authority for Statistics, 2016). In public education, the years of study are divided into three stages: Primary (six years' duration, from ages 6-12), Intermediate (three years' duration, from ages 12-15) and Secondary school (three

years' duration, from ages 15-18). Private education is also available, paid for by the individual child's family. The need and demand for education driven by the young population has required an increase in the number of schools all around the kingdom, and the country now has more than 32,000 schools. Beyond school, students can pursue their higher education in a range of universities and colleges distributed throughout the Kingdom. The number of Saudi universities was eight universities until 2010. Since then, several new institutions have been established, and the kingdom has now 28 governmental universities and 13 private ones (Ministry of Education, 2016).

To meet the needs of the increased numbers of students and meet the expectations of Saudi society about education reforms, education has received visible attention from the government since the establishment of the Kingdom. This has led the Ministry of Education to work on the development of its systems, bringing in educational projects and development plans to solve its problems and to compete with the educational systems in the rest of the world. Al-ameen and Palaiologou (2013) mentioned that "Saudi Arabian education is now going through large-scale reform in which leadership roles and responsibilities have become a key issue" (p.126). One of the fundamental drivers of the development of the education system is the political support from the highest level of political leadership.

This importance of the political support the Kingdom places on education is also reflected in the form of substantial material support. Since 2000, an increase in the education budget recognised the importance of the education sector in developing the nation (Al-Silami, 2010). The total budget of the Ministry of Education was SR 380 billion (£65 billion) for the year 2015, accounting for 19% of the state budget

(Ministry of Education, 2016). Much of this budget was spent on education expenses, including books, infrastructure and programs, as well as teacher salaries. In addition to that, the government has introduced the Public Education Development Project in 2006, known as Tatweer, to infuse innovation and creativity into the design and development of sustainable solutions to the challenges facing the education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A large budget (nine billion Saudi riyals, equivalent to £2 billion) has been given to Tatweer for the development of education. It is integral to the cultural shifts that are happening in KSA, in that a large part of its purpose is to provide all Saudi children and youths with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

Despite this heavy investment and continuing support, education in Saudi Arabia faces a number of challenges – practical and cultural – commonly found in all societies, especially those undergoing rapid development (Al-Seghayer, 2014). The heavily centralized educational system, with its top-down educational leadership approach hinders the professional participation of teachers in the different aspects of school development (Mullick, 2014; Shah, 2014). Thus, there is a disconnect on the one hand between MoE directives and expectations, and on the other hand, how teachers manage the constraints and limitations – some as a direct result of those directives – in practice.

As the current research focuses on the views of English-language teachers, the section below gives a more detailed account of that subject and its teaching in the Saudi context in relation to teachers' professional empowerment in their teaching inside their classroom and beyond.

## 2.3 English-Language in the Saudi Education: teaching and teachers' status

In recent times, with the progress of educational development as governed by the MoE, the incorporation, learning and use of the English language have been crucial in the Saudi Arabian context to drive the nation's technological and economic development. English language taught as a foreign language (EFL) was proposed as a Saudi government initiative, and has now experienced several developments since its introduction in 1925 (Liton, 2012). It was introduced as a compulsory subject at the intermediate and secondary stages, and has now been included at primary school level since 2004. Beyond its teaching in public schools, Habbash (2011) mentioned that English language in the KSA could be seen as:

1. A lingua franca in different fields in some industrial cities, such as Jeddah and Al Khobar.
2. A common means of communication in Makkah and Medina, the two holy mosques, to which millions of pilgrims from different nationalities undertake the pilgrimage (Hajj) every year.
3. Medium of instruction in some colleges and department in universities.

As a subject, the curriculum is prepared and developed by the MoE, specifically, the Directorate of Curriculum. The materials concentrate on all language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). To improve English language teaching and learning in the KSA public schools, English Language Development Project has been established as "a key aspect of the new educational reforms which introduces new EFL curriculum in the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and also includes the hiring of curriculum design experts from US, in order to ensure the quality of the new ELDP curriculum" (Almalki, 2014, p.24).

In regards to teachers' recruitment, the MoE has a written proficiency test for new teachers to recruit them to teach English in its public schools. Teachers are generally recruited to teach in public schools according to specific criteria and regulations. According to the educational Jobs Regulations List that was introduced in 1982, teachers should be recruited with at least a bachelor's degree in their specialist subject, where each teacher earns an average salary of SAR 84,000 (£15,000) per year (Ministry of Civil Service, 2016). Statistically, there are more than 527,030 teachers at all types of schools, from kindergarten to grade 12 (Ministry of Education, 2016). Of this number, 21,532 are teachers of English.

MoE Each year advertises its needs for English-language teachers, who in their application must choose at least ten provinces or directorates in which to be allocated. Teachers then go directly to the directorate for which they are selected, with a further application for at least ten schools in that directorate. Bachelor's degree candidates are informed by the MoE where they should go to work, based on criteria that are mainly governed by demand. For example, the newly qualified teacher is given a choice of towns and locations where there are schools that require their subject qualification. Once located in a school, often far from home, teachers can be further relocated at short notice, and without their consent. This lack of consultation may be seen as characteristic of the top-down approaches which impinge upon the teachers' personal and working lives and, to some extent, lower their status as professionals (Alsalahi, 2015).

In the case of the Saudi English-language teachers, they are graduates with a four-year bachelor's degree in English language teaching as a foreign language. This is offered by Saudi universities with a one-year education qualification. The courses include linguistics, syntax, literature, phonology, semantics, poetry and

drama as well as modules in teaching English as a foreign language which are offered in all departments of English language in Saudi universities. However, each department has its own programmes and requirements, as there are no national standards for the preparation of future Saudi-English language teachers (Al-Seghayer, 2013). Because of the shortage of teachers in this specialism, the MoE recruits other teachers with a bachelor's degree in English literature or with a translation major (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Some of the recruited teachers are "teachers who have already been teaching in public schools; they can study for two years and get a diploma in teaching English" (Alfahadi, 2012, p. 40).

Teachers' recognition and beliefs about their teaching and pedagogy are significantly formed during their university study. These preparatory programmes contribute to the shaping of the graduates' beliefs and attitudes, alongside the knowledge of methodologies and theories needed to manage their profession. However, few of these courses incorporate a pedagogy for teacher leadership (the scope of the current research) as most pre-service programmes in Saudi Arabia focus on technical pedagogy rather than practical skills or experience that would allow future educators to explore how these theories can be applied (Al Asmari, 2016). This pre-service training gap combined with the lack of consultation represent significant barriers to developing teachers as teacher leaders. Al-Seghayer (2013) states that: "It is publicly acknowledged that the proficiency level of the majority of Saudi Arabia's English teachers is insufficient to the degree that they barely understand the materials that they are attempting to teach to students" (p.143).

A study conducted by Liton (2013) revealed that English courses at Saudi tertiary level did not meet the students' needs because these courses were not preparing

them as teachers of EFL in the Saudi context. Moreover, few introduce the graduates to critical pedagogy of teaching in relation to factors contributing to teachers' readiness to assume the roles and responsibilities of professionals (Al-Hazmi, 2003).

Therefore, professional in-service training is sorely needed, as research in the context of Saudi Arabia has indicated (Mahdly, 2001; Al-Ameel, 2002). Al-Seghayer (2014) reports that "the current programmes are inadequate for the preparation of Saudi EFL teachers, especially with regard to disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and technological pedagogical knowledge" (p.146). As a result, in-service programmes for teacher education may negatively affect the beliefs of teachers: most of these programmes were of theoretical and mechanical origin, which dealt with the managerial work of headteachers and they neglect the teacher leadership areas (Alsalahi, 2014). Additionally, Alasmari (2016) mentions that the continuous professional development(CPD) in Saudi education still lacks indigenization of activities inside schools and teachers regularly lack incentives or rewards to engage in the professional development programmes that are run by supervision and training departments as top-down training sessions. Moreover, the headteachers' daily practices of the centralised leadership in their school and their focus on accountability rather than professionalism also affect teachers' beliefs about good leadership practices (Al-Abaas, 2010).

As a result of the deficiency of professionalism among teachers, the MoE has a supervisory department that is responsible for teachers' accountability and professionalism. This goes hand-in-hand with the top-down managerial visits by supervisors, which affect teachers' beliefs negatively, since supervisors tend to be

authoritative during their visits (Alkrdem, 2011). This can be seen as sponsored professionalism, where supervisors control and determine the professional learning needs of teachers and give them tailored and fixed training programmes (Alsalahi, 2015). It is expected that the current study will explore teachers' perceptions of this, and seek input into how it can be addressed.

The lack of sufficient and adequate training, coupled with the centralised leadership and the sponsored professionalism have minimised the professional roles of teachers in decision-making processes. This will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.4 Teachers' roles in decision-making processes**

One of the factors that influence students' learning is teachers as professionals (Darling-Hammond, 2000). However, this is not the case for teachers in Saudi public schools where teachers have very little influence, power or scope in terms of their role outside their schoolroom domain, and in reality are quite constrained within it (Al-Seghayer, 2014). They can be seen as “implementers of decisions about curricula and pedagogy that are conceived and formulated at ministerial level, and supervisors are tasked with ensuring teachers are effective in delivering these” (Alfahadi, 2012, p.42). Issues of accountability are uppermost, to ensure that teachers are working within the standards of the education policy and that objectives are achieved as directed in the curriculum (Alnefaie, 2016).

This centralised hierarchal educational setting puts teachers in general, TESOL teachers among them, have no voice in major areas of decision-making policies that relate to their educational affairs (Mullick, 2014). As an example, the curriculum has changed several times without consultation with, or advance notice to, the teachers; even without any extra training in some cases (Albedaiwi, 2014;



Alnefaie, 2016). Clearly it should be a priority to include and sufficiently train teachers, so that successful implementation of the new materials can be planned for. Without such opportunities, it can be difficult, confusing, and stressful, and lead to further personal and professional disempowerment of teachers. To quote Alnefaie (2016, p.4) on this issue: “In the KSA context, teachers are greatly marginalised”.

This situation had also been noted by Mullick (2014) who depicts the following:

Teachers have been imprisoned to their classrooms and become accustomed to administrative duties, producing teachers who are robotic technicians. It is all too common to find teachers following the instructions of others and lacking the confidence to ask how well those instructions serve their students. (p.46)

Besides the lack of voice and their professional marginalisation (Alnefaie, 2016), Saudi English-language teachers have little time or energy to act beyond their daily teaching, as they are expected to carry out additional tasks on top of their already heavy regular workload, teaching 24 periods per week (Alsalahi, 2014; Alseghayer, 2014). Additionally, the system does not acknowledge that there are roles for teacher leaders, and there is no code of practice for teachers nor is there a job description where teachers and MoE together collaborate to negotiate and develop them (Alsalahi, 2014; Shah, 2014).

Issues of teachers' lack of empowerment can be a result of the hierarchy structure of educational leadership in the context of the Saudi public education. This will be explored further in the following section.

## **2.5 Educational leadership in Saudi public schools**

The structure of a society undoubtedly informs the origins of power and control in its educational system. Hence, it is important to see how the structure, which reflects society's power distribution, is imposed on organizational relationships and

hierarchies of control. The centrality of Islam to educational principles and policy has already been noted above. In terms of teacher leadership, Shah (2006) highlights how The Quran can legitimise principles behind leadership. The concepts of possessing agency and activating potentialities to raise standards in oneself and others are presented through the following verse: “The self (nafs) owns only that which it earns and it changes through what it assimilates, good or bad” (The Quran 74:38, cited by Shah, 2006, p.379). Playing a significant role to enact positive change holds therefore, from a religious perspective, a sense of moral purpose.

As discussed previously in section 2.2, the structure and character of Saudi educational institutions are based on a top-down leadership model, in line with the hierarchical leadership practices (Al-Shumaimeri, 2003). However, individual top-down leadership cannot respond to the global complexity and rapid rate of change in the field of language teaching, and thus they compromise students’ achievement, overall academic freedom and the autonomy of teachers (Bento, 2011) and lead to inequality within the workplace of EFL teachers (Mullick, 2014). The hierarchical educational leadership model essentially means that even when management responsibilities shift from the MoE to local levels, through the Educational Directorate in every province, the control ultimately remains with the MoE.

In the Saudi context, there are two interrelated dimensions of the centralised top-down leadership that affect teachers in their classroom leadership (Alkrdem, 2011; Al-Seghayer, 2014). The first is headteacher leadership. The headteacher actually runs and supervises what is going on in the classroom, based on instructions received from the educational directorate where the school administration is

bureaucratic and centralized in nature (Alabbas,2010). The second is supervision leadership. The supervisor of each subject has an influence on what is going inside the classroom. This type of leadership influences the professional performance of each teacher by assessing how they implement the instructions that they receive from the supervision departments during their regular visits to the schools (Alsalahi, 2015). However, there are issues of clarity, fairness and effectiveness, particularly in the latter model of leadership. In a study into this process, Alkrdem (2011) found that:

supervision practices were marred by questionable practices associated with victimisation, intimidation, inconsistency, confusion, and biases, and instructional supervision are characterised by conflicting role expectations that cause stress and mistrust for teachers. The supervisors lacked the necessary supervisory skills, were not serious about their supervisory roles, and, consequently, they were not taken seriously by teachers. (p. 2)

These two types of leadership follow teachers' lesson plans, assess their performance, determine and deliver continuing professional development programmes for them. Thus, teachers' empowerment can be seen as influenced by a school system structured in a hierarchy of formal positions of designated power and authority. Teachers are consequently required and entitled to seek their support from the recurrent visits of the subject supervisors and their headteachers. This support is again a top-down policy, where teachers depend on the directives of those agentive figures to follow the standards, maintain the objectives of their teaching, adhere to the textbook objectives and materials, and achieve the goals of education policy in their students' learning. Thus, teachers are "primarily configured as implementers of decisions about curricula and pedagogy that are conceived and formulated at ministerial level" (Alfahadi, 2013, p. 42). Leadership is viewed as being dependent upon an opportunity to attain a position rather than on the capacities of a person to lead in professional practice and learning, where

teachers are in a position of dependency or sponsored professionalism and accountability (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Alsalahi, 2015).

This form of leadership and supervision does not affect the professional climate of teaching for TESOL teachers only; it also affects – as Bento (2011) has indicated – the collegiality, autonomy of learning, professional practice and engagement among all teachers in the school. The concept of professional practice refers to “the integration of a teacher’s knowledge, pedagogical strategies and learning theory into a teachers’ professional practice” (O’Brien, 2007, p. 15).

Literature looking at educational policy in KSA indeed supports my observations of the problems of teacher leadership in Saudi Arabia. Alameen et al. (2015) note, in studying the KSA context, that until recently educational system in the KSA is characterised with “heavy centralised control of all aspects of education, mainly through government ministries” (p.122). Shah (2014), in his study of a Saudi Arabian university, noted with regret the existence of a “top-down management and hierarchal leadership style, which gives space to oppression, lack of teachers’ voice, teachers’ disempowerment and organizational failure” (p. 9). This situation in the university level resembles that in public schools as both universities and public schools are governed by the MoE. In a small scale study, Alsalahi (2014) investigated how English language teachers in a Saudi school are viewed, in terms of teacher leadership, and what the challenges are that disempower them from being legitimate leaders in their profession. The findings showed that teachers did in fact recognize themselves as legitimate leaders, despite school culture and top-down policy being two factors that disempowered them from practicing their leadership capacity.

However, the present educational hierarchy often limits the ability of teachers, and leadership can be seen not as collaborative or shared by members of the school. Rather it depends on the status of the headteacher, and is shaped by the rules of the school society and the educational directorate's directives and authority factors. Teachers in general and English-language teachers specifically have few chances to participate in leadership positions, except the chosen teachers to act as headteachers and supervisors. All the other positions apart from teaching, they relate to students' counselling, learning resources and activities mediators. Nonetheless, as Alsalahi (2014) has stated that teachers have the desire and capability to be leaders, even if the barriers of the current structure may affect their ability to practise teacher leadership.

To sum up, although the new development plans and the educational initiatives in the Saudi educational policy have acknowledged the importance of Saudi teachers in educating and teaching students in public schools, recent studies have shown that there is still a gap between legislation and practice in regards to empowering teachers and including them in the different decision-making processes relating to their teaching and their students' learning. These barriers, as the current research aimed to explore from the perspectives of TESOL teachers, underlie the fact that teacher leadership has yet to be made manifest in practice in Saudi Arabia.

## 2.6 Summary

The current chapter has introduced the context of the research, including an overview of Saudi Arabia and its education system. The current educational leadership culture and teaching community has been outlined, with further focus on English language teachers' roles in education. It has been noted that alongside the significant developments in education policy and curricula generally, major

changes are needed to empower teachers, so that positive change can be enacted and teachers have the opportunity to a more active role in fulfilling their moral sense of purpose in their professional lives. Given the considerable economic and social changes ahead for Saudi Arabia with Vision 2030, creating new educational leadership opportunities for EFL teachers will be important, so that the challenges ahead can be successfully addressed.

All the existing empirical studies have shown that there is a lack of empowerment and professional recognition of teachers in KSA, with the centralised nature of the educational system tending to marginalise teachers from decision-making processes and profoundly limiting their fulfilment of their professional potential. The chapter aimed to provide the necessary information about the context of the study to help with the discussion of the findings presented in chapters 5 and 6.

It is hoped that the current study will contribute to recognition of the importance of teachers' roles and their capacity to be leaders, with an informed understanding of the particular Saudi context, leading to improvements in the educational system of KSA.

The following chapter will introduce the literature review in order to examine current theory, empirical studies and practice relevant to the present research.

## Chapter Three: Literature Review

The previous chapter provided a general overview of the context of the study. In this chapter literature related to teacher leadership is reviewed and discussed, and some definitions are provided in order to give a workable understanding of current theoretical and conceptual research frameworks. While there is a plethora of literature about teacher leadership in education generally and in TESOL, there is a damaging lack of empirical studies on the topic in the context of Saudi public education.

Therefore, this section will briefly review the construct of leadership as an introduction to educational leadership and its literature. Following this, teacher leadership's origin as part of educational and school leadership will be explored, allowing the definition of teacher leadership used in this study to be formulated. The definitions and issues raised here will assist in constructing the analysis of the data collected in this research, with a discussion of links between these findings and existing work taking place in Chapter 6.

The skills that allow teachers to be leaders in their classrooms and schools as well as in their profession are discussed here. The development of teacher leadership and teachers' roles are subsequently discussed, and the benefits of teacher leadership are examined. Specifically, it is shown how teachers, through professional capital, can shape and construct their professional practice and learning. Additionally, teacher leadership's empowering and disempowering factors are reviewed, as well as existing literature relating to the Saudi context. Based on the theoretical and the conceptual framework will be discussed accordingly, it is argued throughout that four key concepts are crucial to teacher leadership: empowerment, agency, autonomy and professionalism which are the

result of maximising the teacher professional capital in a school with professional community of practice.

### **3.1 Leadership in Educational Institutions**

This section identifies and critiques common models of teacher leadership that have emerged from existing definitions of leadership, showing the need for a more empowering relationship between teachers and the institution(s) within which they work. Empowerment is defined in TESOL as “a goal to assist people with low status, influence and power to increase their chances of prosperity, power and prestige” (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p.194) If an environment can be created in which teachers can develop leadership roles, this will bode well, I contend, for the stake they have in building and leading their profession for the future, and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Leadership in the education sector is largely derived from more general leadership theories, and shares a number of their aims and characteristics. However, the development of leadership in education reflects its specific views and assumptions about how to lead. Leadership in general works through important roles to successfully help an organization to achieve its vision and specific goals. As Lambert (2003) argues, there has been a paradigm shift among theories and approaches of leadership studies, from one-person leadership to collaborative notions of leadership. In the education context this means that instead of concentrating on the abilities and skills of the headteacher as the critical factor in school development, school leadership is treated as a constructive and collaborative practice that provides a community of learning and knowledge building among the school’s teachers and students. The reasons for this shift are shown in the discussion of different conceptions of leadership and their suitability



for teachers in the following sections, which highlight two of the leadership styles relevant to teacher leadership through their specific application to teaching roles: instructional and distributed leadership (Sergiovanni, 2001). Each one of these plays an integral part in the development of teacher leadership, the focus of the current research. These styles shape the roles and responsibilities of leaders, their dispositions and characteristics, and can be seen as the basis for the form of teacher leadership that manifests itself in classrooms and in schools more generally.

Instructional leadership places emphasis on teaching and learning, and its focus is on functions, tasks and behaviours, where the school is managed in such a way as to improve students' learning performance (Bennet & Anderson, 2003; Harris, 2003). Hallinger (2003) confirms that "instructional leadership focuses predominantly on the role of the school principal [headteacher] in coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school" (p.331). Research on school leadership has often stressed the instructional role of headteachers in their schools (Hallinger, 2003; Danielson, 2007). The body of empirical research on instructional leadership also indicates its positive impact on the achievements of students (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Within this model of leadership, headteachers help their teachers with instructions to work collaboratively and provide opportunities for teacher education and professional learning that maximize teaching practice in classrooms. However, this model of leadership preserves a boundary between headteachers and teachers, where headteachers are viewed as the instructional leaders, and teachers as followers (Sergiovanni, 2006). This kind of leadership puts the emphasis on headteachers and neglects other contributors to leadership activities of the

school's development, such as teachers (Hallinger, 2003). Over time, this hierarchical structure prevents the emergence of collective school leadership. The reliance on an individual leader is not a viable option for improving the leadership capacity for school reform; as has been argued by Kise and Russell (2009) and Williams (2009), for multiple individuals to lead, leadership capacity must be distributed among them.

In response to limitations in the instructional model of leadership, there is a growing body of literature which emphasizes a collective leadership. The idea of collective leadership capacities is not new, however; it has been seen in education as a model of practice during the 1980s, with the evolution of distributed leadership as a model that denotes work as a cooperation of "collective interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation that is paramount" (Spillane, 2006, p.4). Spillane uses a distributed leadership model to help frame the practice of shared leadership and incorporate multiple stakeholders in the leadership practices of school-building. This is also stressed by Harris (2003), who states that "leadership is a shared and collective endeavour that engages all members of the organization" (p.75). This kind of leadership reinforces teachers' professional engagement and learning, as they work collaboratively and share a common purpose in a collegiate manner (Shah, 2014). However, it has been criticised for being still essentially a form of top-down delegation rather than a relocation of decision-making (Gabriel, 2005; Spillane, 2006). The leaders in this distributed model are only those teachers who have been given formal positions in the school development. Given the importance still placed on delegation by experts or authority, the distributive model, although an improvement on instructional leadership, remains too structurally hierarchical to be sufficient; it still leaves expert teachers in a position where they are simply being instructed what to

do, since empowerment still comes from an institutionalized hierarchy where power is delegated from above (Muijs and Harris, 2006).

Although instructional and distributed leadership models differ, they share similar weaknesses in that the professional identity and professional practice of teachers as legitimate leaders are still vague and have not been recognized (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). The models recognise the importance of teachers by giving them some formal roles, but only as followers. The instructional and distributed leadership models both deny teachers sufficient opportunity to fulfil the criteria for teacher leadership as they lack agency and opportunities for empowerment, as will be discussed in the theoretical and conceptual framework of the current research (Muijs and Harris, 2007). However, from studying these models, the necessity of a viable notion of leadership in teaching has emerged; as Silva et al. (2000) claim, “recent calls for teacher leadership have appeared that suggest that teacher leadership is not only necessary for the profession but also critical to educational reform efforts as well” (p.779). This thesis argues that since teacher leadership cannot be fully understood or put into practice without the input and collaboration of the classroom teachers themselves, these professionals ought to be fully included in the distributed and collective leadership of the school.

### **3.2 The construct of teacher leadership**

As the preceding discussion has suggested, the concept has evolved as a model that gives empowerment to teachers to act in leadership roles. Although new theories and practices of teacher leadership may not have been fully implemented, their origin can be traced back to the 1990s when educational theories began to undergo a paradigm shift in school leadership, from centralized, top-down policies and individual leadership, towards decentralized and collective leadership

(Mangin, 2007). This paradigm shift began to treat teachers as human beings able to fulfil their professional roles, to a greater or lesser degree, according to their sense of belonging to the teaching profession, the diversity of their expertise, their ability to take on different roles in school development, and their good relations with their colleagues (Durrant & Holden, 2006). Curci (2012) stated that “if teachers are truly regarded as professional masters of their craft, their level of expertise must be permitted to shine and contribute to enhancing school practice and climate” (p.43).

However, the concept of teacher leadership remains difficult to define precisely, and it can be argued, as yet “not been clearly or consistently defined” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p.256). It began with the formal role of teachers, with leadership designated accordingly, then advanced to consider informal roles inside and beyond the classroom. The following section discusses a selection of relevant definitions of teacher leadership, showing the many elements that must be considered, and the effects of applying each definition.

The term teacher leadership has been defined according to its formal and informal roles. It can be defined by referring to the teachers who lead, by describing them as “leaders within and outside the classroom; who identify with and contribute to a community of teachers, learners and leaders; influence others to improve their teaching practice; and accept responsibility for realizing the goals of their leadership” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p.49). This definition seems to say more about the promotion of teacher leadership than its application. It contains elements of informal teacher leadership – “a community of teachers, learners and leaders” – and also formal leadership – those who “accept responsibility for realizing the goals of their leadership”. Thus, teacher leadership is attributed to teachers “who

continue to teach students but also have influence that extends beyond their own school and elsewhere” (Danielson, 2006, p.12). This opportunity has the potential to empower teachers by placing them at the centre of educational processes in which they can enact their agency in terms of policy influence, learning strategies and pedagogical practice. Priestley et al. (2012) see teacher agency as achieved by means of a unique interplay between teachers and their context. Agency is thus not something we can possess, rather it is an emergent phenomenon achieved while teachers engage with and navigate the opportunities to develop areas that they consider within their remit in the given context. Thus, as experts regarding their classrooms and the wider socio-cultural context, teachers are best-placed to develop their leadership and increasingly ‘achieve’ agency in order to bring about the changes needed together. Indeed, Leithwood and Reil (2003) stress that “teacher leaders can help other teachers to embrace goals, to understand the changes that are needed to strengthen teaching and learning and to work towards improvement” (p.3). Following this line of thought, there is a quasi-symbiotic relationship among teachers; each can strengthen the other’s agency. Nonetheless, it will be important to problematize this idea given that there are clearly factors which both enable and limit this agency and empowerment (see further analysis in 3.8).

Frost and Durrant (2004) define teacher leadership as “the exercise of leadership by teachers, all teachers, regardless of position; it is not a matter of designated role or delegation, but rather a matter of teachers’ agency and their choice in initiating and sustaining change” (p.308). This definition pertains to teacher leadership in relation to the concept to teachers’ agency in their teaching and learning practices, where they are able to make choices in their teaching, and their agency operates both within and beyond their classroom. Teachers’ agency is a

question of how they are able to practise their professional knowledge, take charge of their professional practice and engage professionally, regardless of their position or specific professional role. From a social constructivist perspective, teacher leadership is further defined as the process by which “teachers are leaders when they function in professional learning communities to affect student learning; contribute to school improvement; inspire excellence in practice; and empower stakeholders to participate in educational improvement” (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000. p.28).

All these definitions highlight an important facet of the concept, where leadership can be built through influence and collegiality, rather than being something imposed or delegated. Though a certain degree of autonomy is presupposed in all versions, the latter definitions also emphasise interdependence, while Frost and Durrant (2004) focus specifically on the independent agency and decisional capital of teachers. However, this expansive concept of teacher leadership carries with it the risk that it may hinder the professional development of teachers if it neglects to start from classroom leadership and work upwards; if too much emphasis is placed on contributions to school culture or wider society, teachers in such roles may be distracted by overwhelming school activities beyond their classrooms. Thus the questions raised in these definitions remind us that the clarity around roles – as well as the alignment of teacher leaders’ goals to those of their students, institutions and society – must be judiciously balanced with the flexibility and freedom which teachers should increasingly be offered.

Although the above definitions have provided insights into the concepts of teacher leadership, they focus very much on strategies that can be used to develop a school from a structural perspective (Patterson & Patterson, 2004). The current

research, by contrast, includes an exploratory approach, valuing the experiences and views of the teachers who would carry out the school development, as well as the intended outcomes and effects. To this end, after reviewing the diverse developments of teacher leadership in the following sections, a workable concept of teacher leadership that incorporates these factors will be defined within the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning the current research in section 3.4, before which an overview of the development of the concept will be provided, below.

### **3.3 Development of Teacher Leadership**

In response to new demands for school reform and development, there is increasing recognition from policy makers about the importance of including teachers in school leadership practices (Danielson, 2006). Teacher leadership as a notion has been introduced within the last two decades as a way of improving education output by offering teachers some power to practice their agency (Little, 2003).

Inevitably teacher leadership changes and evolves, but also inherits continuities from previous theories and practices. Since its appearance in the arena of education, teacher leadership has been undergone several developmental changes. Silva et al. (2000) describe three waves in the understanding of teacher leadership. The first wave began in the early 1990s, where leadership roles for teachers had a “managerial aspect” and were realised in positions such as department head, mentor teacher, head teacher, or master teacher (p. 780). Teacher leadership occurred within a school hierarchy and was treated merely as a position in the organisation of the teaching process. This included classical and managerial leadership responsibilities and roles such as subject leaders and

department chairs. This can be seen as a top-down model, where teachers with leadership roles control and decide on the work of other teachers who are positioned as passively accepting the top-down imposed policies and decisions. Harris and Muijs (2004) describe teacher roles in this practice of teacher leadership as “representatives of change rather than leaders who enact or initiate change” (p.16). Supervisors and head teachers would here be the typical teacher leaders in their fields and their role divisions mainly concerned with the efficiency of the system. As discussed in Chapter 2, and as the discussion in Chapter 6 will demonstrate, headteacher and supervisor leadership is dominant in KSA, whereas teachers are viewed as passively receiving their instructions from above.

This first wave directly parallels the instructional leadership model discussed in section 3.1. It does not truly enable teachers to activate their professional agency in school development. Rather, it treats teachers in relation to assigned positions and formal roles. This wave by implication assumes that teaching is just “technical and managed work that requires close supervision” (Lieberman & Miller, 2005, p.152).

The captive roles of teachers in this wave gave rise to the second wave of teacher leadership, which capitalized on the strength of teachers as instructional leaders by using their knowledge, moving teachers away from managerial roles towards participative roles as curriculum developers and team leaders (Silva et al., 2000). This wave is connected to the distributed leadership model discussed earlier, since it values expertise and experience, but with a top-down delegation of roles. Such a shift initiates the extension of teachers’ roles beyond the classroom, into the activities of school leadership. The impact on professional engagement by teachers in this wave included a form of decentralization within schools from one-



person leadership to a distributed style that reduced the managerial control of one person; however considerable top-down leadership through delegation was retained (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

The top-down delegation of roles to teachers in the second wave gave rise to the third wave of teacher leadership, which focused on teacher knowledge and collaborative activities, assisting colleagues with professional development activities, mentoring and problem solving (Silva et al., 2000). Teachers in this wave are encouraged to develop their professional knowledge and skills that foster collaboration among colleagues, and to develop a school culture of trust and support. Although this kind of collaborative culture is productive, it often remains top-down in its distribution and does not meet the needs of teachers, as teacher professional training and knowledge are imposed rather selected and developed by teacher for and by themselves (Martin, 2007). Teachers may, for example, be forced to meet to share best practice at the behest of authorities, but their voices are often not heard when they wish to speak on issues through their actual professional knowledge as teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, although frequently subjected to disempowerment through top-down leadership, teachers can in this wave lead daily while they are in their classroom, through informal teacher leadership practices; this in turn enhances their collegiality and professionalism and provides scope for further leadership development.

Galland (2008) summarizes teachers' role in the previous three waves as follows:

The first wave included traditional teacher leadership roles, such as serving as department chairs, while the second wave identified teachers as instructional leaders and took them out of the classrooms to serve as coaches and facilitators. The third wave of teacher leadership emphasizes the importance of teachers leading from within the classroom and values collegiality and professionalism. (p.11)

The third wave was not, however, the final stage of teacher leadership development. Pounder (2006) identifies a fourth wave called transformational classroom leadership. This kind of teacher leadership echoes Little (2002), who viewed teachers as "intellectual professionals through their subject expertise" (p. 922). Pounder (2006) correctly notes the intellectual and professional aspects of leadership within the classroom, which correlate with students' learning and progress. Thus, teacher leadership essentially entails the practice of leadership by teachers inside their classrooms, regardless of their formal position or delegation, as a matter of empowerment and agency. Transformational teacher leadership treats teachers as exemplary teachers with tangible benefits to themselves and their students' learning (Pounder, 2006). In this wave the concentration is on the leadership efforts that teachers accomplish for the benefits of their students' learning inside their classrooms. Pounder stated that transformational classroom leadership "enhanced learning, creativity and ethical behaviour" (p.541). Although the fourth wave explicitly adhered to the work of teachers inside classrooms for the benefits of their students' learning, it still does not develop a connection to the roles of teachers beyond their classrooms or developed the professional collegiality and collaboration. As will be shown in the discussion in Chapter 6, the views of teachers about teacher leadership make inextricable the aspects of teaching that fall inside and outside the classroom.

Given this overview of the existing literature on teacher leadership and its four waves of development, it is evident that there are limitations to the available models. To varying degrees, the four waves either overload teachers in terms of work or to varying degrees designate them only as followers. It will therefore be argued that it is necessary to firmly map social constructivist approaches onto notions of teacher leadership and focus on how teachers – within their

communities of practice – can be further empowered to develop their professional agency. A theoretical framework which incorporates these features will be sought and analysed in the following section.

### 3.4 Theories underpinning teacher leadership: Theoretical Framework

Moving beyond notions of distributive and collective leaderships and the construct of teacher leadership through its continuing development, the current research is underpinned by three models that interrelate in terms of their treatment of teacher leadership. These models are distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006), community of practice (Wenger & Snyder, 2002), and professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

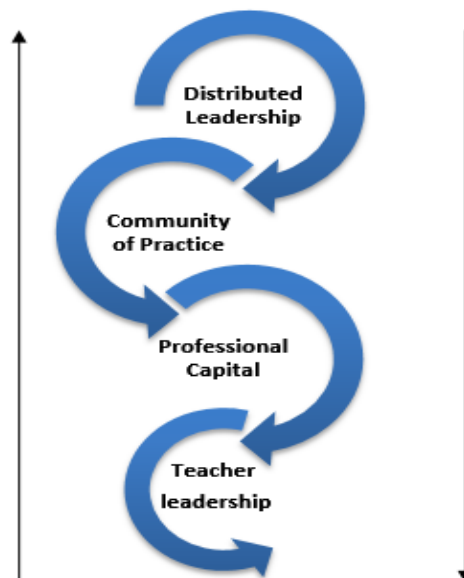


Figure 3: Teacher Leadership Underpinning Theories: theoretical framework

Teacher leadership, as previously discussed, is a model based on distributed leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2006). Thus, teacher leadership derives its emphasis on collective guidance and collaboration from distributed decision-making processes and activities, as leadership is distributed among the stakeholders in

the school. This will engage many teachers to participate in leadership activities that enhance collegiality and their professional development, which in turn build the school's capacity for development and reform. School stakeholders, teachers among them, share their responsibilities and work together, allowing collaboration to flourish and isolation and dissent to be minimized (Gronn, 2000). Teacher leadership is based upon a collective form of leadership, where teachers assume leadership roles that foster their professional agency inside and beyond their classrooms, regardless of any designated roles or positions.

As teachers practise their professional agency in developing themselves inside their classrooms in their teaching materials and pedagogy, and share their professional agency in their activities with colleagues and the school community, collaboration and professional engagement can be initiated in the school. Thus, teacher leadership also features some of the aspects of a community of practice, where teachers engage in leadership activities and tasks. Wenger & Snyder (2002) defines a community of practice (CoPs) as "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis" (p. 140). Thus, teachers share their professional knowledge and practice to develop themselves and others in their communities. Although communities of practice are governed by rules, they are not restricted by space and time (Agrifoglio & Metallo, 2015). The school can be a place of community of practice where teachers share common interests and goals for their students' learning, their teaching and pedagogy and the development of their school. Novice and experienced teachers can share together personally and professionally their professional knowledge and maximize their professional engagement in the different school activities. According to the CoPs model, social interaction and personal skills play integral

roles in allowing the culture of such a community to thrive (Wenger & Snyder, 2002).

Beyond their formal roles, teachers can foster their social and professional networks informally to share their knowledge and practice (Cox, 2005). This model views teaching as a legitimate profession where teachers can lead their professional practice (teaching) and their professional learning within the community of their school. Indeed, significant existing literature indicates the significance of CoP for teachers' collegiality and cooperation, encouraging them to expand their professional leadership roles inside and beyond their classrooms (Crowther, 2009; Danielson, 2006). A more bottom-up approach which would allow teacher leadership to grow can thus be envisaged through encouraging teachers' self-development to be autonomous practitioners, within and beyond their school CoPs.

As an important theme within teacher leadership, it is now important to consider how the notion of autonomy should be an integral part of a TESOL-based model of teacher leadership (Benson, 2007). The concept of autonomy in learning is defined as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." (Holec, 1981, p.2). Indeed, it has been argued that if teachers are to develop autonomy in their students, they should also experience it themselves in their professional practice (O'Hara, 2006). Therefore, teachers are individuals who must be encouraged to take leadership roles within their context and supported to do so by their colleagues and headteachers.

As this preceding discussion has suggested, autonomy is clearly an important strand of teacher leadership. I would, however like to emphasise that certain caveats exist. There is a danger that autonomy is misconstrued as teachers doing

whatever they want, which subsequently leads to a reluctance on the part of those in authority to grant these 'powers' of autonomy (O'Hara, 2006). In fact, teachers should be accountable for agreeing on their meaningful roles as well as realistic and shared goals within their community of practice (Lamb, 2008). Clearly teachers need professional and self-development opportunities to consider how their beliefs on autonomy can be better put into practice to strengthen their own potential for autonomy as well as that of their students. The importance of striking this balance between capacity and accountability, willingness and experience, is demonstrated in the responses given by participants in Chapter 5. Implied in the concepts of autonomy and self-development is a sense of professionalism. It has already been argued that teacher professionalism is best found within the collegiate relationships of a community of practice.

Thus, continuous improvement and professional development undertaken collaboratively and supporting increasingly autonomous teacher leadership practices can significantly boost teachers' professional capital. Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) define professional capital as "one's own or group worth, particularly concerning assets that can be leveraged to accomplish desired goals." (p.3). According to them, professional capital comprises three elements: human capital, social capital and decisional capital. Human capital relates to teachers' qualifications, their knowledge and their personal skills. Social capital relates to collaboration with colleagues, teachers' collective responsibility and social networks inside and beyond the school. Decisional capital relates to decision-making processes and problem solving. Though many leadership roles exist within a school, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest that there are a number of qualities that leaders have in common which constitute their professional capital,

and this view is taken up in the current research project and will be discussed further in section 3.5.

Teacher leadership is thus exercised through teachers' professional practice and their professional learning within their CoP. This is important because it enhances professionalism and builds a positive culture of collegiality within schools, which can help to "unlock untapped potential in teachers and, in doing so, increases the capacity of schools to meet the needs of pupils and to enhance educational achievement" (Bangs & Frost, 2012, p.46). Therefore, this thesis contends that building the professional capital of teachers through distributing leadership roles can maximize teachers' agency and autonomy, to develop their professional capital (learning teaching, professionalism) for themselves and school community in a thriving CoPs inside and beyond their schools.

This theoretical framework is compatible with the interpretivist standpoint that underpins the current research, and is explained in detail in Chapter 4. The construction of teacher leadership as a phenomenon that the research is designed to explore also adheres to this theoretical framework, which will be further demonstrated in the discussion of the collected data in Chapter 6.

Meanwhile, the theoretical framework will guide the discussion of the following sections about teacher leadership skills and teacher leadership roles. It will also help in constructing the conceptual formwork at the end of this chapter. Finally, it will underpin the proposed model of teacher leadership that will be discussed in Chapter 7.

### 3.5 Teacher Leadership Skills

In order to achieve empowerment and agency for their students it can be argued that teachers need to achieve these themselves, and that these constitute their professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Teacher leadership skills and dispositions, I contend, are important when considering strategies to achieve this and can first be viewed through professional capital theory. This theory can help distinguish skills by dividing them into three particular areas: human capital, social capital and decisional capital, as discussed in section 3.4. These forms of capital, rather than being linked to formally appointed positions, are built through sets of common skills and opportunities.

Various elements constitute the key skills for effective teacher leaders, such as being active in the leadership process, confident in pedagogical practices, social in relationship building, as well as competent in teaching and learning situations (Crowther, 2009). Crowther focuses on the human, social and decisional aspects of professional capital as the basic skills of effective teacher leaders. Similarly, Danielson (2006) describes teacher leaders as having professional knowledge and pedagogy. Other interpersonal skills include adeptness at solving problems, resolving conflicts and negotiating rough terrain (Danielson, 2007). These intersect with Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) three types of capitals, whereby teacher leaders are skilful in leading diverse participants to shared decisions, in building trust and rapport and knowing how to be strong but caring and compassionate (Gabriel, 2005; Martin, 2007). This strongly resonates with empirical studies which uncover recurrent and emphatic views of all stakeholders regarding the need for trust (Jones, 2007; Muijs & Harris, 2007; DeMore Palmer, 2011; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2015) and the importance of collegiality.



A further skill domain, collaborative proficiencies, includes being proactive in the search for, and creation of, opportunities for collaboration (Donaldson, 2007). All of these elements highlight the importance of good communication between teachers, and hence the necessity of high social capital to develop a professional atmosphere within professional CoPs. Such leaders model collegiality as a mode of work by employing interactive skills to develop networks of support (Crowther, 2009). Curci (2012) echoes this by saying “teacher leaders who can recruit the efforts of others and facilitate a workable environment can make huge strides for their school community” (p. 49).

The final domain of skills which define teacher leadership relates to administrative proficiencies. These may include managing time, prioritising, delegation of tasks, acting responsibly, and helping in the process of school development. Such skills are important in:

confronting and overcoming human and structural barriers, building supportive structures, securing and using resources, helping in building the school culture and structure, and conducting an organisational diagnosis are also important proficiencies for the teacher leader. (Murphy, 2005 p.20)

The administrative skills are related to the decisional capital of teachers. As teachers’ experience grows, their administrative proficiency is likely to improve, as is their judgment (Crowther, 2009).

Teacher leadership skills thus constitute an important part of the current research, as the participants will be invited to explore this from their perspectives as the skills that they see as constituting their teacher leadership roles inside and beyond their schools, and to act as agents of change for the improvement of teaching and learning and their school CoP.

By discussing the different skills of teacher leaders which develop their agency and autonomy to work in their CoPs as change agents, maximising these skills that constitute their professional capital as discussed above will help them to act as teacher leaders in their schools. The following section will discuss the different roles for teacher leaders as reviewed in the literature.

### **3.6 Teacher leaderships roles**

This section will now move on to consider how the literature frames the aforementioned leadership skills in the context of how they are or should be enacted in teacher leadership roles. It has already been alluded to in section 3.1 that teacher leaders are teachers who act in particular formal and informal roles and responsibilities. It has also been established that collaborative relationships include those with headteachers, the school management team and colleagues; empowering themselves and others; and influencing others towards realizing a shared vision for improved teaching and learning in school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Crowther, 2009). These connect to the professional practice and professional engagement aspects of the teacher leadership definition outlined in 3.2. Teacher leadership positions and roles can indeed help in school development, student learning, teachers' professional practices, building CoPs, modelling collegiality and support for colleagues, and intellectual and professional growth (Lieberman et al. 2000; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). These roles a multitude of on-going task and projects include setting directions, developing people, and refining and aligning the organization's climate and culture, to create educational opportunities and conditions for best practices of teaching and learning, and for better results in student achievement (Durrant & Holden, 2006).

With this array of duties, it is important to consider which areas will need to be managed and which approaches are best suited to these tasks. Similar to La Ganza's (2008) dynamic interrelational spaces of teacher autonomy, the roles and responsibilities of teacher leadership can be classified according to the four zones that Grant (2008) identified: within the classroom, collegiality outside the classroom, school development outside the classroom, and building communication in the community of their schools. Given this complex web of professional tasks and roles implied within these zones, from a practical perspective Gabriel (2005, p.20) reminds us that "schools are social systems" that provide clearly defined roles, responsibilities and expectations that can serve as targets for principals, school management teams and teacher leaders to aspire to. Gabriel also adds to our understanding of transforming teacher leader roles by emphasising how they can impact significantly on the culture of a school and how it communicates. The importance of teacher leaders building professional learning communities themselves is also given prominence as this may often be side-lined or ignored. This can be viewed as maximising the social and professional capital of teachers to act in such roles.

On the one hand, the teacher-leader is required to be a 'reflective practitioner' (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) to fulfil the transformative potential of the role; on the other hand, formal roles may still be subject to more top-down systems of operations management and accountability. In practice, teacher leaders must deal with the inherent contradictions and tensions of attempting to convert theory into practice. How to address this tension is an interesting question when developing a theoretical framework and clearly should be informed by empirical data from the main actors (teachers in this case).

Although there are clear advantages in establishing formal leadership roles, the literature also looks at informal roles of leadership in which teachers engage in order to enhance their professionalism and to make a difference in the schools in which they operate (Frost & Durrant, 2004; Spillane, 2006, Bangs & Frost, 2012). It is not a matter of a designated role or delegation to take on leadership roles in the school, but rather an enactment of teachers' agency to initiate and sustain change. In this context, Frost and Durrant (2004) called for a school culture that "does not assume leadership is automatically linked with positions in the organisational hierarchy of the school. Instead it recognizes the potential of all teachers to exercise leadership as part of their role as a teacher" (p.210).

This links directly with the considerations of this thesis, the notion of professional capital, and that leadership roles and responsibilities should come from the recognition of the human capital that teachers develop first in the classroom. Given a corresponding view of schools as learning communities, all teachers should be supported to practise their professional leadership and participate in the work of school development. Nevertheless, structure is clearly important. Galland (2008) showed empirical data on the importance role clarity holds when implementing successful teacher leadership initiatives (see 3.9). To sum up, teacher leadership roles have three main facets, as classified by Katzenmeyer & Moller (2001): leadership of students and teachers, leadership of operational tasks, and leadership through decision making. These are parallel with the three components of the professional capital developed by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012): human capital, social capital and decisional capital. This assertion will inform the current research questions, and help frame the discussions of Chapter 6. It is important to establish how teachers view the scope of their leadership roles inside and outside the classroom, to discuss what is working best at present, and

to reflect on what could be done more effectively. It will be interesting to research how teachers in Saudi Arabia respond to the idea of incorporating these informal voices within the context of a largely hierarchical leadership.

Having reviewed the different roles of teacher leadership and connecting them to the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis, the following section will now review how teacher leadership roles could benefit the stakeholders in education within and beyond the school community.

### **3.7 Benefits of Teacher Leadership**

As mentioned above, definitions of teacher leadership in which teacher leaders act in different formal and informal roles and responsibilities can modify how teacher leadership is viewed in building teachers' professional teaching and learning, their pedagogical strategies, school culture and school improvement. The findings of several studies over the last two decades have revealed the rich of benefits of teacher leadership for all school stakeholders. A significant body of literature has defined teacher leadership from different angles, and it has been the subject of in-depth research, demonstrating its importance in the field of education (Muijs & Harris, 2007; O'Brien, 2007; Bangs and Forest, 2012; Mackenzie & Angelle, 2013; Riveros et al., 2013). Additionally, Murphy (2005) argues that this emphasis on teacher leadership as a domain of research should lead to empowerment, transformation and community building, as well as teachers' well-being and their professional development, which encompasses the general vision of teacher leadership supported by this thesis. As shown in the existing literature, the benefits and importance of teacher leadership can be connected to the following categories: individual teachers' self-efficacy and empowerment, teacher development and professionalism, developing collegiality, helping headteachers,

helping students and building curricula. Each of these categories will be discussed below.

### **3.7.1 Teachers' agency and empowerment**

Teacher leadership can be viewed as a way of empowerment for teachers' autonomy, professional agency and professionalism (Web, 2005). In this sense, schools are viewed as professional communities and teachers have opportunities to develop their individual professional capacity, and teacher leadership can be enhanced. There is a clear need for teachers to be utilized to their maximum professional agency as leaders both in and out of the classroom, in order to benefit students' learning. Teachers as professionals possess both professional learning and professional pedagogy, which can enhance their own professionalism and that of their colleagues. Teacher leadership enhances the empowerment of teachers and improves their quality, since they can improve their self-confidence, increase their knowledge and improve their attitude towards their teaching (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

Consequently, giving teachers ownership of their practice can heighten their morale and sense of efficacy (Akert, 2009). Teachers who participate in teacher leadership roles can improve their agency in their teaching and professional learning (Moller & Pankake, 2006), as well as empowerment in their pedagogical practices coupled within their classroom work (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

For this thesis it would therefore be crucial to investigate further how teachers perceive themselves as professionals with empowerment and agency who can invest in their professional capital to maximise their professional practice and their voices being listened to by officials in power and authority. Shah (2006) reminds us that educational leadership perspectives are not fixed, but evolve and develop.

This dynamic, socially-constructed process should make sense of the ways that “power and authority structures are and should be constituted” (Shah, 2006, p. 378). By allowing participants the opportunity to engage in this process, in a similar vein, Alsalahi (2015) shows that an important part of teacher agency is through teachers visualising their professionalism and recognising themselves as legitimate teachers and, by extension, teacher leaders. This research can contribute to the field of teaching in KSA by making decision-makers aware of the potential of Saudi TESOLers’ decisional capital and challenging existing practices and how teachers through their professional agency can participate and engage in decision-making processes. The research also intends to discover the contributions that teachers perceive themselves to be delivering in their professional teaching and professional learning context. The importance of improving teacher’s empowerment and agency will be discussed further below, alongside the other categories of the benefits of teacher leadership.

### **3.7.2 Teacher Development and Professionalism**

It has been demonstrated that school leadership that takes into account the participation of teachers in their decision-making improves the professional capital and performance of their teaching (Birky et al., 2006). The involvement of teachers in school leadership activities offers teachers opportunities for continuous learning (Barth, 2001; Vieira, 2007). Teacher leadership roles such as coach, instructional leader and curriculum developer all can lead to the professional development of teachers (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Such involvement can help teachers to tap into their professional capital to act and contribute to their own knowledge building and professional growth, which in turn promotes school development, enhancement of collegiality and student achievement. As has been noted, teacher leaders are able to develop their own professional learning and help to improve their colleagues’

professional capital (Durrant & Holden, 2006). Barth (2001) has argued that “Teachers become more active learners in an environment where they are leaders” (p.445).

According to Hargreaves (2001), developing teacher’s knowledge and skills in parallel builds their professional capital, which comprises three elements: intellectual, social and organizational. The intellectual component refers to the professional knowledge teachers have. The social capital is the relationship among teachers and their professional networking. The organizational capital refers to the norms and climate inside schools that mobilise the two other forms of capital. This model brings together the skills developed in both continued learning and on-going professional practice, to support the development of teacher leadership as understood within this thesis.

As discussed, the empowerment of teacher leaders to act actively by maximising their professional agency could in turn develop a CoPs where their colleagues collaborate and share. The following section will discuss the benefits of teacher leadership on developing collegiality.

### **3.7.3 Collegiality and professional collaboration**

Much of the literature about teacher leadership stresses that its benefits extend beyond teachers as individuals, to developing collegiality and professionalism more generally. Little (2002) suggests that collegiality consequently develops teachers’ collaboration and idea-sharing, which further promotes school development and students’ learning. Harris and Muijs (2003) confirmed that “collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership because it is premised upon a redistribution of power within the school, moving from hierarchical control to peer control” (p.38). Collegiality thus not only directly benefits the operations of the



teachers, but contributes to the decentralized model of teaching that is developed as part of this research.

Given this more holistic approach in relation to the underpinning theoretical framework, teacher professional capital and agency can all be seen as outcomes of teacher leadership that build collegiality within schools (Harris, 2003, O'Brien, 2005). Furthermore, it has been argued that educational reform cannot happen simply through the individual expertise of headteachers and supervisors; teachers can help in the process of educational change and school development. Teacher leaders can in this way be expected to “guide fellow teachers as well as the school at large toward higher standards of achievement and individual responsibility for school reform” (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000, p.29). These teachers are the ones who best recognise their own potential to support their colleagues' needs. Wenger & Snyder (2002), stated that teachers collaborate to build their professional knowledge as an arena of innovative CPD in their schools' CoP. Empowering teachers to take a lead in the development of their colleagues can enhance their social capital. Being collaborative helps teachers themselves and their colleagues to build a community of trust and engagement and enables them to act with agency.

It is this model of teacher leadership that capitalise on collegiality among teachers in their schools as CoPs that will assist the decision-makers in KSA to best improve teaching and learning in their specific context. This thesis argues that creating a community of practice, teachers' growth and learning can be seen as the paramount benefits of teacher leadership, along with the benefits of collaboration and involvement in the decision-making process.

The previous benefits relate to teachers' agency and empowerment to invest in their professional capital as teacher leaders, which in turn maximise their collegiality within their school as a CoP. This school culture of empowered teachers working collegiately as agents of change could benefit their headteachers, as will be discussed in the following section.

#### **3.7.4 Collaborative school leadership**

The empowerment of teachers in their professional capital maximises their roles and their colleagues as well, as discussed above. The literature frequently focuses on how headteachers can support teacher leaders. However, it is also useful to consider how this support is returned by teachers to their headteachers. Developing teacher leadership and autonomy should not be seen as a burden (O'Hara, 2006); rather, increased bottom-up leadership can facilitate the roles of headteacher. Teacher leadership can be seen as a source of help to headteachers to lead their school's development. A school is too complex to be run by an individual headteacher, making it necessary to include teachers and seek help from them in leadership positions (Moller & Pankake, 2006). Headteachers increasingly recognize that they have neither the expertise nor availability of time to create and promote the vision of their school on their own. Specifically, teacher leaders can be seen as professional peers of the headteachers and a valued source of guidance.

Indeed, those headteachers who practise instructional leadership over teachers have been shown to be less effective than those who focus on developing professional capital, most specifically social capital, as discussed in section 3.1 (Elmore, 2000; Moller & Pankake, 2006). Hargreaves and Fullan's notion of professional capital seems to corroborate this evidence, as teachers use their

professional capital in ways that assist headteachers to spend more time on improving collaborative leadership within the school and building social capital outside the school in the community, rather than having to spend their time working with individual teachers. Headteachers would also gain a school, or community of practice, of proactive professionals through extending their professional practice beyond their classroom (O'Brien, 2005).

The benefits that teacher leadership lends to headteachers and the collaborative leadership in the school through empowered teacher leaders could also extend, with the other benefits to teachers themselves and their colleagues, to the design and the development of the curriculum. This will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.7.5 Curriculum improvement**

Teacher leadership would provide agency and ensure increased autonomy for teachers, so that their moral purpose is better employed, their relationship building increases, and their knowledge creation can be used as a driver for improvement in the national curriculum. According to Stacy (2013), professional teachers can be leaders when they have the power to engage in curriculum building and to assess their professional practice in teaching their classes. This can be achieved if educational policy recognizes teachers' professional capital, reduces the hierarchical structures in schools' administration, and gives space for teachers' self-professionalism and professional engagement. With regards specifically to curriculum development in TESOL, Wedell (2003) argues that on an international scale curriculum developers have failed to consider the teachers' role. As experts in their classrooms, they are well-placed to contribute to curricular innovations and have a larger role in how to implement goals than is usually credited. Furthermore,

if teachers are able to play a more prominent role in curriculum development, it follows that greater involvement in other domains is also feasible. The human and decisional capital of teachers' professional capital, once recognised and valued by the school and policy decision-makers, are useful tools for developing curriculum material that better meets the objectives' of curriculum design and development (Hargreaves, 2001). The inclusion of teachers in the development of curricula could have mutual benefits for both teachers – by maximising their professional capitals – and the curricula, as teachers are the hands-on experts that deal with them in their daily teaching.

Adding to the previous benefits of teachers' agency and empowerment, teachers' collegiality, headteachers and curriculum development, teacher leadership overall benefits students' learning and achievement. This will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.7.6 Students' overall achievements**

Whilst helping students is familiar territory to teachers, the specific effects of teacher leadership merit further consideration. Silins & Mulford (2002) assert that in a school community where teachers are empowered and teacher leadership is practised, the students' learning outcomes are more likely to improve. This assertion seems plausible at an intuitive level, but further evidence can also be seen in Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), who after implementing teacher leadership in US schools, confidently confirmed that it has “a positive influence on teacher effectiveness and student engagement” (p.116). Furthermore, schools where teachers practise their teacher leadership through classroom decisions about pedagogical and methodological choices tend to have fewer problems with student achievement and behaviour, and build networks and collegiality between teachers

and the administrative staff in schools (Ingersoll, 2007). Teacher leadership can enable teachers to develop methodologies and be empowered to improve the students' learning, as research indicates that teacher leadership has a positive effect on student performance and student engagement (Barth, 2001; Harris & Muijs, 2003). Teacher leaders also help their school to discipline their students, as stated by Curci (2012): "schools in which teachers have more control over key school-wide and classroom decisions have fewer problems with student misbehaviour" (p.5).

Although the literature reviewed about the benefits of teacher leadership, however, there seemed to be few studies that researched in details the direct links between teachers' formal and informal roles of teacher leadership and the different stakeholders in the school and beyond, as this thesis will suggest in Chapter 7.

By recognising the importance of teacher leadership as discussed previously, literature reviewed and several studies have reported the factors that enhance or impede the roles and practices of teacher leadership inside and beyond the classroom. The following sections will provide a review of these factors.

### **3.8 Barriers to and Supports of Teacher Leadership**

Although teacher leadership has many advantages for the stakeholders as discussed previously, as a process there are several factors that enhance or impede its opportunities of practice in schools. Teacher leaders do not work in isolation; they have to work with others so that they can ensure success in their professional engagement in their daily roles, both inside and outside their classrooms. Various practices within schools form the conditions that support or impede the flourishing of teacher leadership positions and roles. They may be the result of physical structure, organizational structure or the relationship dynamics

between school stakeholders (Curci, 2012). Physical structures relate to the building and space where teacher leadership is practised, whereas organisational structures relate to the system, rules and roles of teacher leadership that run the practice of teacher leadership.

The following sections will discuss those structures in schools in relation to the following factors: teachers' beliefs, teachers' training and professional development, colleagues and peers, educational policy, headteacher leadership, school culture, rewards and promotions, and work overload.

### **3.8.1 Teachers' Beliefs**

Teachers, in general, are perceived as being highly educated and committed to the profession (Sergiovanni, 2006). The beliefs that teachers hold have been demonstrated to have a particularly strong impact on practice when they are shared among teachers in an organisation (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Teachers' beliefs and perceptions of themselves as legitimate professionals could result either in their taking on teacher leadership roles and responsibilities, or in merely positioning themselves as responsible for teaching (Anderson, 2004; Muijs & Harris, 2006). They may position themselves in this latter, more limited, way if they are not enabled to take roles beyond their classrooms. Professional status and the positioning of teachers play an important role in teachers raising their professional practice, and engagement in school development. Curci (2012) states that “[m]any teachers desire to play a role or have greater input on how business is done in their school, and at minimum wish to be respected for their expertise and successes in their individual classrooms” (p.13). Teachers with high professional status facilitate their own professionalism, education and training, and share a professional code of conduct (Spears et. al., 2000; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Therefore, the understanding of leadership that teachers have is important to establish before they take on leadership roles (Phelps, 2008). These considerations also play an important role in the current research, where the Saudi English-language teachers were asked about how they view the concept of teacher leadership in their context and, as a consequence, how they view and position themselves as teacher leaders. In TESOL, accessing and enriching teacher beliefs is widely accepted as a way to promote good practice and professional development (Borg, 2005). However, further awareness-raising on this issue may be necessary in order to legitimise the importance of teachers' beliefs on leadership in the context of Saudi Arabia.

### **3.8.2 Colleagues and Peers**

Teachers' views as individuals affect their desire to take on teacher leadership roles. However, they do not work in isolation, and teacher groups, as collegiality and their CoPs can also present obstacles or opportunities. Teachers learn from their own experiences and those of their colleagues, as they share what they have learned from each other within their professional communities (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Harris (2003) stresses this communal aspect by stating that "investing in the school as a learning community offers the greatest opportunity to unlock leadership capabilities and capacities among teachers" (p.315). Teacher leadership is thus dependent on collegiality within schools as it unifies them in working collaboratively (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Murphy, 2005). All these studies refer to this aspect as important, but this thesis seeks to place it at the very centre of professional teacher leadership, and as a matter of urgency. Until teachers find their voice within a school and activate their agency and autonomy, they will not feel empowered to engage in practising and developing better leadership in their schools for the benefit of their colleagues and students.

Colleagues in the school can prove to be barriers to teacher leadership if the relationships between teachers are negative, or if leadership roles are viewed negatively. Barth (2001) notes that “[a] kind of taboo among teachers in many schools, then, makes it difficult to accept or display leadership. Teachers who lead who behave like administrators violate the taboos of their school and may be dealt with severely by their peers” (p.446). This is also stressed by Donaldson (2007), who states that “[w]hereas principals can shape teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, other teachers do shape them” (p.29). For example, formal leadership roles could create resentment between teachers in the school if the appointed teacher acts as a typical school leader and excludes others from decision-making strategies (Anderson, 2004). Role acceptance by colleagues is essential according to Galland (2008), in order to “allow certain teachers to become leaders” (p.35). When considering how to address potential negative responses, Greenier and Whitehead (2016) – looking at TESOL leadership specifically – remind us of the importance of authentic leadership. They emphasise that many leadership qualities can grow from good classroom practitioners and general teacher characteristics such as leading by example, setting and achieving goals, encouraging, and many others. Many teachers must therefore be regarded as having the capacity to step up to leadership roles, and the majority of teachers can, if encouraged, take up some informal leadership duties relevant to their professional interests. By contrast, isolating teachers by ignoring their professional capital may affect educational reforms and reduce their professional capital. To remove this risk, promoting the professional engagement of teachers and maximizing their professional teacher leadership practice will empower teachers in school development and build their professional capacity and agency as they are engaging with their students and subjects (Hemric et al., 2010).



The current research considers how individual or groups of teachers work collaboratively to tap into their potential professional capital through their CoPs. Existing empirical evidence from teachers suggests that with effective leadership and support from peers, their confidence and performance can be enhanced (Kiranh, 2013).

Despite the extremely significant role colleagues play, clearly teachers' ability to take on leadership roles depends partly on their skills and on their working environment. A further influence will be the training that they are offered, both before and during their service as teacher. The following section discusses previous research into these areas.

### **3.8.3 Training and Professional Development**

University preparatory programmes fundamentally influence the views of teachers regarding leadership and their level of responsibility to act as teacher leaders (Barth, 2001). Not only must trainee teachers gather the knowledge and skills to effectively manage classroom implementation of tasks, but deeper and broader knowledge is required, particularly of instructional and evaluative methodologies, if these teachers are to perform as effective leaders. However, Murphy (2005) claims that "there is ample evidence that teacher leaders are being asked to assume teacher leadership roles with little or no training" (p.108). This presents a growing problem, since appropriate training is an important enabler for good teacher leadership and the development of their professional capital. In addition, teachers need to be listened to in building the structure and content of their professional learning and education, since "when teachers have a voice in determining professional development learning opportunities, they typically assume responsibilities for their professional growth" (Akert, 2009, p.113). Curci

(2012) also identified that “[p]roviding opportunities for professional development and the availability of time for mentoring can be a tremendous asset to aspiring leaders, along with a climate where others feel free to take risks without fear of critique” (p.55). In other words, there is a determined need for, and capacity for, specific forms of leadership training, both within teacher preparation programmes and for teachers in active practice. This is required for building the professional capital skills of teachers both professionally and socially.

Dove and Honigsfield (2010) propose a system for TESOL education which may well constitute a starting point for developing teacher leadership and allowing teachers to develop agency and autonomy. Despite the aforementioned lack of pre-service training on leadership, it can nonetheless be developed in a non-intrusive way in-service. It is suggested that teachers develop collaborative practices so that they can cross-reference, support and build on each other’s work. This can involve teaching the same students, planning together, developing a curriculum in tandem. It can also involve team teaching or team assessment with negotiated roles. If successful, this can improve inter-teacher relationships and offer new leadership and collaborative roles which are ultimately beneficial for enhancing teaching and learning. Nonetheless, the school and its management can play a key role in the success of leadership.

The following section will discuss how educational policy is an important factor to establish a system that initiates and develops teacher leadership in schools.

#### **3.8.4 Educational Policy**

Part of encouraging teachers to understand their leadership potential relates to the policies of the education system and structure they work in. Educational policies should play an important role in recognizing the potential of teachers’ professional

practice, professional knowledge and professional engagement. They should help teachers to practise their autonomy and agency in a collaborative collegial culture of leadership (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). Recruitment, promotion, appraisal and assessment policies may be experienced as oppressive among teachers if top-down measures dominate; teachers may consequently lack ownership of their profession, feeling demotivated and losing their commitment in such leadership roles (Muijs & Harris, 2006).

Policy should support a clear division of labour for teacher leadership positions and roles. Bolman and Deal (2003) argue in their assessment of paths to school leadership that “[o]rganizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and a clear division of labor” (p. 45). Role clarification is one of the requirements to establish teacher leadership practices in school reform (Galland, 2008). Bolman and Deal (2003) state that “[c]lear, well-understood roles and relationships and adequate coordination are key to how well an organization performs” (p.34). Otherwise, role confusion and ambiguity can be prevalent in the school structure because of a lack of clear description of what is required of teacher leaders and their roles. Clear role definition leads to role understanding and role acceptance (Galland, 2008). Johnson and Donaldson (2007) argue that “[t]o be viable, these roles must have well-defined qualifications, responsibilities, and selection processes” (p.13). Curci (2012) has further argued that “[t]he lack of clarity of available roles for teacher leadership can also discourage some from accepting roles” (p.60). Therefore, any workable definition of what is meant by acting as a teacher leader must provide both clear accountability and appropriate freedom of agency to permit effective leadership.

Furthermore, policies should aim to develop teachers' professional engagement, professional practice and professional capital by reducing standardized top-down testing and assessing, isolated school structures and sponsored professional development from outside of schools (Muijs & Harris, 2006; Stacy, 2013). As previously discussed, a system where teachers are not assessed in a way that respects their professionalism cannot account for their engagement, professional practice and learning. This may be a hindrance to teacher engagement in the process of school development and contribute to the high turnover of teachers from both formal and informal teacher leadership position (Keller, 2003). The fact that teachers rarely have a strong voice in the means and measurements of their assessment means that the structures are often perceived as imposed, or unsuitable, resulting in a lack of teachers' perspectives on their professional engagement which affects their teacher leadership practice beyond their classrooms as "their classroom is their only territory" (Shah, 2014, p.11). Thus, teachers' professional practice and professional engagement are limited. Their leadership efficacy, professional commitment, and collaboration with colleagues will face barriers if the educational policies and standards constrain their voice on their professional practice and professional engagement (Hargreaves, 2002).

Although educational policies can be one of the important factors that support or hinder teacher leadership in schools, as previously discussed, school headteachers are the one who deal with teachers on a daily basis within and beyond their classrooms, as the following section will discuss.

### **3.8.5 School Headteachers**

Headteachers are crucial figures for helping teacher leadership to flourish and mature within the school, yet they may equally act to the reverse. Previous

research in the leadership context confirms that headteachers' leadership styles strongly affect students' learning, the classroom teachers and the school environment (Bogler, 2001). Kumaravadevelu (2006) endorsed this opinion, pointing out that the traditional view of a school leader has even been restricted to the principal or other administrators, with teachers seen as "passive technicians". Hoy and Hoy (2009) confirm that one of the educational strategies for headteachers to implement teacher leadership in their schools is to "provide constructive support and obtain the resources and materials necessary for teachers to be successful in the classroom. Resource support is a basic principal role" (p.3). Mangin (2005) reported that "administrators directly impacted teachers' abilities to access classrooms and implement the teacher leadership position as intended" (p.15).

There is a general consensus in the literature that schools need effective leaders to improve teaching practices and learning activities, and direct the school community for better student achievement, as teacher leadership appears to flourish in schools where headteachers are willing to distribute some positions and roles to teacher leaders (Muijs & Harris, 2007). In particular, headteachers' support and encouragement is necessary for teacher leaders to be effective in school development processes (Birky et al., 2006). Shah (2014) stated that the absence of appreciation, trust and encouragement of teachers by their headteachers leads to the marginalization of teachers in their professional context. This is also in line with the views of Bailey (2008), who asserted that encouragement from headteachers is an important factor in teacher leaders' roles in ELT. Likewise, Hobbs and Moreland (2009) mentioned that professional learning, autonomy, and engagement in decision-making processes can be

important elements in the empowerment that teachers receive from the school headteachers.

Accordingly, this thesis argues that rather than only considering what is necessary for the teachers to perform, leaving them in the position of dependents, headteachers should attempt to provide an environment of collegiality and autonomy to improve the effectiveness of their organization (Muijs, 2013). Heateachers' leadership boosts teachers' professional capital, if teachers feel that they are recognized and positioned professionally. Headteachers should also facilitate purposeful CPD and reward teacher leadership initiatives and involvement (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Crowther et al., 2009). This thesis therefore hopes to contribute to establishing how education in Saudi public schools can move from delegated orders from headteachers to their teachers to real agency that develops teachers' professional capital to participate professionally in their classrooms and beyond in their school development.

In doing so, teachers need to feel that they have a new set of responsibilities and are permitted to take on new roles in a school culture that initiates and promotes professional learning as a CoP. This will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.8.6 School Culture**

School culture is an important factor for teacher leadership to flourish and ensure teacher leaders' engagement. Empirical studies frequently emphasise that a positive school culture is pivotal to fostering teacher leadership (e.g. Jones, 2007) and retaining those teachers. As Barth (2001) has argued: "A school culture has a far more influence on life and learning in the school house than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principle can ever have" (p.7). The school organization as an environment for

teachers' professional practice has an effect on the classroom teacher's support and instruction, which in turn affects student learning (Bryk et al., 2010). To construct a supportive school culture, collaboration among teachers should foster their professionalism, to build up their professional capital and professional capacity, in a non-hierarchical structure leadership (Hatcher, 2010). In this way, as noted by Gabriel (2005) teacher leaders can themselves exert a considerable influence over the direction that the culture of a school takes.

Moreover, collaboration as an important element of the culture of the school could be a reason for teachers to commit to their schools (Muijs & Harris, 2006). Thus it would help schools to be places where learning communities are built. By contrast, the absence of collaboration among teachers inhibits the development of teachers' professional capital and professional learning, as emphasized by Alma and Muijs (2003), who stated that "if schools are to become better at providing learning for students, then they must also become better at providing opportunities for teachers to innovate, develop and learn together" (p.41).

Indeed, schools whose culture promotes communities of practice help to empower teachers' professional knowledge, which enables them to engage in the different professional practices of collaborative work and joint responsibility for all the school stakeholders (Sergiovanni, 2000). Ultimately, teacher leadership demands a school culture where teacher leaders can apply their professional learning and practice, and teachers are empowered and valued as having professional skills that help in school development (Danielson, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, the physical structure of the school can affect the development of such a culture. Specifically, the school should support a space for collaboration (Galland, 2008). Silva et al. (2000) found that schools that do not

provide staff rooms and training rooms for this purpose are not providing clear and sufficient support for teachers' professional practice and engagement. Mangin (2005) also stresses the importance of the physical layout of school classrooms and venues in providing support and collaboration for teacher leadership. Likewise, organisational and cultural factors affect the prospering of teacher leadership in schools (Frost & Harris, 2003; O'Brien, 2007). By creating a culture within the staff of collaboration and of the sharing and growth of social capital, a school can improve its teaching provision for all students; it can also empower every teacher to feel their human capital is valued and then inspire the potential for leadership and promotion as they accumulate more decisional capital by sharing and challenging each other's experience.

### **3.8.7 Promotion and Rewards**

Promotion and rewards can be factors of encouragement for teacher leadership. Rankings and professional respect help teachers to engage in professional practices inside and outside the school. However, occupational hierarchies where teachers are ranked solely in terms of status positions and salaries depend only on years of service can limit teacher engagement (Barmby, 2006). Naturally, rewards – financial and otherwise – must be kept within sensible limits; Curci (2012) mentions that “[b]udget restraints, however, often prevent principals from financially compensating those who go above and beyond to serve on committees or take on leadership roles such as department head or mentor” (p.6). That said, he adds that “without incentives or time set aside to permit collaboration, teacher leadership often will not emerge on its own” (p.7). In other words, teachers must be encouraged to take on leadership roles, but cannot be expected to do so without rewards, or without affordances being made in their general workload for the time and effort needed to contribute to the school culture. The importance of



rewards is not only as bonuses to the teachers but as forms of recognition – making the teachers feel less isolated and passive – and of helping to establish clear leadership roles, if taking them on leads to rewards.

### **3.8.8 Work Overload**

Research has reported that work overload and large amounts of paperwork and administration hinder teachers' participation in the work of school development. Additional tasks that are imposed on teachers affect their professionalism, professional practice, professional efficacy and professional engagement (Gerrard, 2004; see also section 2.5 regarding the Saudi context). Subsidiary tasks are an increasingly prominent feature of the teacher's workload: "Responsibility upon responsibility has been added to each teacher's working day: responding to parents, overseeing after-school activities, attending professional development activities, and, of course, maintaining standards" (Barth, 2001, p. 445). Research has shown that teachers in many schools have little time to act for the development of their school beyond their actual practice inside the classroom (Suranna & Moss, 2000). This lack of time is partly related to increasing workloads, but can also be linked with work structures that demand teachers' time with little benefit to their professional practice or development. Thus, workloads of teachers are likely to constitute a major constraint to the implementation of teacher leadership.

It is hoped that this study can access teachers' beliefs on this matter and elicit some potential solutions to these constraints. Such insights are currently lacking in the literature, particularly in the context of KSA.

### 3.9 Previous studies related to the research topic

Relatively few research have directly addressed the area of this study, and although many have made valuable contributions, there are limitations or omissions that require addressing. Some areas need particular attention, and have informed the design of this research, such as a lack of studies that consider teachers' own views about leadership rather than its theoretical conception, and studies focusing on the particular Saudi context. A small number of studies, mostly originating in the USA and the UK, touch on this area, but this research appears to be the first of this type within the KSA public education.

There is a need for evidence-based teacher leadership practice and perspectives from around the world so that theoretical frameworks and policies for teacher leadership that are appropriate to the context can be developed. For example, in Hong Kong, one striking similarity with Saudi Arabia is the top-down approach to leadership in schools (Ho & Tikly, 2012). Change agency, collaboration, collegiality, power, and authority are highlighted in that study as important areas for teacher leadership. Particularly, it is noted that policy must engage with and formulate long-term strategies to counter and challenge existing power structures and reposition teachers as teacher leaders. The case of Hong Kong strongly resonates with the issues currently facing schools in Saudi Arabia, and more specifically, future EFL teacher leaders.

Among existing studies is that conducted in Turkey by Kiranh (2013), who examined the expectations and perceptions of primary school teachers and principals about teacher leadership. The study used a questionnaire completed by 195 teachers and principals. It showed that the participants had high expectations and perceptions of the different roles of teacher leadership in their context;

however, their expectations of the roles were higher than their actual perceptions. The study also found that teachers needed confidence and support, and required appropriate professional and pedagogical conditions within the system to motivate them to develop their leadership practices and skills. Kiran's study was quantitative in nature and consequently was able to target a much wider sample than is possible for the scope of the present thesis. However, Kiran's findings have been useful to shape the direction of research questions and how the interviews have been analysed, to corroborate whether the same is true in KSA and, if so, probe further into both how teacher leadership roles can be improved and how barriers to teacher leadership can be mitigated.

In the UK, a qualitative study by Muijs & Harris (2007) was carried out to explore the practices of teacher leadership in schools, and factors that could enhance teacher leadership roles. The three case studies in three different schools revealed different degrees of teacher leadership roles and practices in action. Teachers, senior management team and head teachers' perspectives were identified. There was a consensus among the participants that they could participate in teacher leadership initiatives and decision-making processes, although the extent of this varied among the three schools depending largely on the school leadership culture. The data also stressed the effects of culture, recognition and rewards, shared vision among staff, clear lines of management structures, collaboration, staff development and external support on the flourishing of teacher leadership.

However, the study revealed a number of barriers to the development of teacher leadership within the context. These included lack of time, lack of experience and confidence of teachers, lack of communication, that not all headteachers were

responsive to teacher leadership initiatives, passive attitudes among teachers towards teacher leaders' roles, and that teacher leadership roles are not clearly defined. Notably, the level of detail given by participants about the practicalities and teacher experiences of teacher leadership was still significant, and may be greater than in the current thesis, due to the Saudi participants having less experience with teacher leadership. This is a recurring theme noted in Chapter 5, through analysis of the responses of participants in this study.

One interesting commentary from participants in Muijs & Harris (2007) is that being able to critique colleagues and systems was an important part of collegiality. Also noteworthy was the considerable differences in cultures of educational leadership between schools, despite being accountable to the same local education authority. It was finally concluded that beliefs of participants, structures of leadership and trust were the three fundamental factors that enabled or constrained teacher leadership, which is also in line with Jones (2007). The findings concur with existing literature; however, when placed in this authentic context, it is possible to locate teachers' voices which resonate with (or could resonate with in the future) the voices of Saudi teachers, as shown in Chapter 5. Muijs and Harris's study is also thought-provoking in terms of the multiple stakeholders involved. It is additionally suggested that longitudinal studies are useful given the dynamic nature of teacher leadership change.

It may be deduced that teachers' openness to accepting new roles can be a prerequisite to teacher leadership. Recognising the significance of this, in the USA a qualitative phenomenological study was conducted by DeMore Palmer (2011) to explore how teachers choose to act willingly as informal teacher leaders. Using semi-structured interviews with informal teacher leaders, headteachers and other

non-leader teachers, participants described factors that encourage them to be informal teacher leaders, such as the school culture, relationships with colleagues, training and professional development, and headteachers. DeMore Palmer argued that each respondent experienced these factors in a different way to develop a self-motivational response which was unique to them in how it encouraged them to be informal teacher leaders. The present study in KSA will also consider the views of nine individuals to share and compare their experiences with teacher leadership in the unique contexts of their schools. In a similar way to Muijs and Harris (2007) who emphasised the need for trust, DeMore Palmer stressed the importance of collegiality but warned of the need for criticality rather abrupt criticism, which was seen as symptomatic of a culture of blame or bullying in the workplace. Surprisingly, this empirical finding was seemingly absent from the theoretical literature on teacher leadership and may thus require further consideration in relation to how to develop social capital and supportive communities of practice. Fairman & Mackenzie (2015) suggest that teacher's ambivalence towards the term teacher leadership, which is negatively construed by some teachers, may be a significant problem. They conducted interviews in seven Maine schools in the USA with 40 teacher leaders – 16 of whom have been recognised for their innovative practices – to present narrative case studies. Similarly, to the present study, they investigate teachers' understandings of the concept of teacher leadership. A second research question focused on how they influenced colleagues. The findings confirmed, as per previous studies, the centrality of a collegial climate and trust. An interesting finding was that many teachers were reluctant to admit their leadership and described it as 'just pulling together' or something necessary to formally support school structures and informally 'outside the school hierarchy', and unrecognised. The study concludes that although teachers are carrying out

excellent leadership, they lack confidence in recognising their roles as ignitors and catalysts.

It is clearly vital to research the role headteachers play in raising the profile of their teachers. A qualitative case study in the USA by Jones (2007) aimed at exploring how teacher leadership is developed by principals in elementary schools. The study utilized interviews and focus groups to gather the data. The findings revealed that principals provided teacher leadership roles for teachers, also including them in the decision-making processes and building capacity for teacher leaders by establishing a culture of professionalism and culture. The data showed that the teachers were satisfied with the school environment as they practised their teacher leadership alongside their colleagues' professional development and their school development. He also suggests that there may be a positive correlation between teacher leadership and teacher retention in schools, an idea that may be relevant to the employment conditions reported by teachers in this study, in Chapter 5.

In a similar vein, a study by Burke (2009) examined the role of principals in building a collaborative culture to develop teacher leadership capacity in secondary school. The study included a case study using interviews and focus groups, with 15 teachers and three headteachers, using two qualitative data methods to reach the data. The data revealed that principals play an important role in enhancing a culture of teacher leadership for teachers' empowerment, collaboration and support.

Supporting Burke's (2009) findings, another relevant study is a US study entitled "Teacher leadership: What are teachers currently practicing and what do they want to practise?" by Sides (2010). The research was aimed at exploring the current

and desired practices of teacher leadership and the relationship between principals' practice and teacher leadership. The study utilized a questionnaire responded to by 625 teachers. The data revealed that teacher leadership was more prevalent than anticipated. Surprisingly, the study did not find any relationship between principals' practices of transformational leadership and teacher leadership practices. Time and principals' support were two important factors for teachers to act in teacher leadership positions.

A study of the relationship between school structures and effective teacher leaders was conducted by Galland (2008). This quantitative study used a questionnaire focused on teachers who lead from within their classrooms. It showed that three components of school structures are statistically significant in affecting the culture of teacher leadership in schools: role clarity, physical structures and organizational structures. These findings resonate with the reviewed literature about leadership in the Saudi public schools as well as my experience as a Saudi English-English teacher. The study will feed into the discussion of the finding of the current research on how these can affect participants' engagement and practice of teacher leadership in their schools. Although role clarity was the most significant factor identified in Galland's study, it is predicted that the present thesis will offer broader discussion of the possibilities of teacher leadership focusing on teachers' beliefs and perspectives (Muijs and Harris (2007), which is perhaps the most appropriate investigation at the present time in Saudi Arabia.

Another justification for exploring teachers' voices in depth also emerges from a comparative case study by Curci (2012), which examined the perceptions of both teachers and administrators about teacher leadership. Interviews were used with the participants of two districts' schools to examine how teacher leaders are

identified, and what supports or obstacles in the culture of the school could promote or hinder teacher leadership practices. The study revealed that teachers and principals recognize the importance of teacher leadership and value its practice in the school reform. However, it was interesting to note that while teachers emphasised the importance of leadership roles in terms of devoting time and space for collaboration and sharing with colleagues, this was not noted by administrators. The implication is that teachers should have more of a say in defining and developing leadership roles and informing the policies driven by administrators.

O'Brien (2007) argues in his study conducted in Australia that "building professional capital through the rich resource of teachers' professional practice, teachers' professional learning and teacher leadership development" is a necessity for school development in twenty-first century (p.27). The focus of his paper was on building professional capital through teacher leadership development initiatives and roles. The paper followed up on his (2005) study that explored the perceptions and experiences of leadership by teachers in Catholic schools and their opportunities for leadership development. The research setting was two Catholic secondary schools in the State of Victoria, as a small-scale qualitative study using four focus groups. The data in his study revealed that teachers lack the capacities to practice leadership in their professional life. The study utilized the professional capital theory of Hargreaves (2001) to develop a model of maximizing professional capital. Although the paper and the study context and culture are different from those of the current research, O'Brien (2005,2007) helped the current research to construct a view that treats teachers as having potential as change agents, and that recognises how their professional practice and engagement in teacher leadership development could in maximize



their professional capital. The current research also benefits from the use of qualitative focus groups in teacher leadership studies, and O'Brien's assertion that through teacher leadership practices teachers can build their professional capital.

By reviewing literature, there seemed to be lack of research that directly aimed at studying the direct link between teacher leadership informal and formal roles on the different aspects of their benefits as discussed earlier. In addition, few empirical studies have provided solutions to the barriers of teacher leadership practices in schools. The current research will provide suggestions for future research regards to this concern.

The reviewed literature has sought to show that while several other studies have been important in the design and framework of the current study, there are differences of context, approach and methodology, and that while I have profited from studying these earlier researches, this study will nonetheless contribute to the current debate through its employment of notions of professional capital, communities of practice, professional agency, professional autonomy and empowerment, and through its exploration of the specific context of Saudi Arabia.

### **3.10 Research Conceptual framework**

The conceptual foundation for the current research is based on the need to include teachers as change agents to promote a culture of professional practice and engagement, and provide support and collaboration for themselves and their colleagues which in overall contribute to the students' achievement and school development. The research is underpinned by the teacher leadership model, which as the preceding literature review has shown, is significant for all the stakeholders in the school.

As mentioned earlier, this research draws on the existing literature in this field, and proposes a definition of teacher leadership that begins very much in the classroom as the start point of teachers' professional learning and practice. In order to avoid the potential limitations of the definitions discussed in section 3.1, the current research has defined teacher leadership as teachers having the professional capital – including human, decisional and social capital – to engage through their professional agency and autonomy to build on their own and their colleagues' professionalism, which in turn impacts positively on their students' achievement and their school's development as a community of practice. This definition would treat teachers differently – as legitimate stakeholders, having agency – giving them a professional identity that incorporates knowledge, practice and engagement and authorizes their development of pedagogical teaching and learning. Finally, the study provides some grounding for the possibility of what I will name the fifth wave (see 3.3 on waves one to four), and will accordingly argue for a revised model of teacher leadership, which will be introduced in Chapter 7

It has been asserted that teachers need to be agents in their classroom first and foremost. Here, they become empowered to practise and develop their agency and autonomy, and to choose the appropriate methodologies and approaches that best serve the needs of their classroom. By being empowered here, they can in turn inspire their colleagues, students, stakeholders and communities in their schools; O'Brien (2007) highlights that leadership by teachers is influenced and shaped by their agency. This agency helps them to tap into their professional capital to develop their school's effectiveness by utilizing their personal and interpersonal human and social resources. The teachers' professional agency, as it helps them build their professional capital, also builds their teaching and learning leadership. It enhances social relationships and collegiality among members of the

school community with mutual respect, morality and a capacity to develop professionally (Hargreaves, 2001).

In conclusion, “teacher leadership” in this thesis comprises four key components: empowerment, agency, autonomy and professionalism. Teacher leadership is founded on the empowerment of teachers to develop their agency and professionalism within the classroom to best deliver good teaching and learning; through increased autonomy at a classroom level, teachers can best develop professionally and then share these practices with each other, in order that their school delivers an effective learning environment for their students. In this way, teacher leadership encompasses professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. This concept of teacher leadership equates teacher leadership with their professional agency and does not treat teacher leadership as a position or a designated role (whilst recognising the inherent tensions of this).

### **3.11 Summary**

As this chapter has sought to show, there has been a shift in the role of educational leadership in schools. Effective school leadership cannot solely depend on the headteacher's leadership, and teachers' roles need to be enhanced to tap into their professional capital to lead in the development of their students' achievement, colleagues' professional learning and school development. This literature has shown a paradigm shift which justifies the current research agenda and accordingly demands a change in the educational system, to develop and initiate roles and positions that legitimate teacher leaders. It has been seen through the literature that several roles can be utilized to allow teachers to act professionally for their school's improvement and reform. It has been emphasised that these roles vary and can be formal or informal. However, teachers who act as

leaders in those roles should, it has been shown, have certain skills and characteristics that could help them in their professional engagement and practice – the extent to which the participants raise these and how they prioritise them will constitute an interesting finding.

In addition, it is recognised that certain conditions can either support or diminish teacher leadership in the school. In terms of supporting factors, the literature broadly shows firstly that school culture and other enablers of teacher leadership should be cultivated to enhance teachers' ability to take the lead in school development. Secondly, successful strategies lead to a professional context for teachers to tap into their professional knowledge and practice, and engage in educational reforms. Thirdly, the literature examined here has found many additional benefits for the inclusion of teachers in teacher leadership roles, both formal and informal. The recurrent theme of factors which enable and constrain teacher leadership in the literature strongly influenced the choice of research question. Therefore, it will be pivotal to tease out participants' perspectives in this area as well as to compare and discuss this in the context of the literature in order to arrive at some recommendations which are appropriate to the Saudi context.

It is thus argued that understanding teachers' knowledge of the relevant concepts as well as teachers' perceptions of themselves, their current and desired practices and the factors that enable or disempower them as teacher leaders will be crucial if we are to envision a context-specific approach in terms of best practice for achieving teacher leadership. The literature in this chapter has now provided some theoretical directions related to teacher leadership, its conception, implications and practice, and has allowed an elaboration of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin the current research. It has also highlighted some

significant themes emerging from empirical studies which are of relevance to the present study. The findings in Chapters 5 will be discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to the existing knowledge in literature.

In the next chapter, the research methodology that supports the theoretical approach of this thesis will be developed and explained in detail.

# Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the procedures and design of the current exploratory research situated within the interpretivist paradigm and is qualitative in approach through the methods chosen: focus groups, interviews and reflective writing to elicit data that answer the research questions in Chapter 1, section 1.3. First, some of the theoretical and methodological standpoints existing in educational research are considered. This is followed by an explanation of the research methodology chosen for this study. Issues regarding the research design are then clarified and the rationale for the decisions on how to proceed with the chosen methods is explained. Following this, the data collection methods and sampling processes are described accordingly. Subsequently, a description of the data analysis process is provided. A description of how issues of data quality assurance have been addressed is then given, before finally ethical issues of the study are considered.

## 4.1 Paradigmatic and methodological standpoints

The present exploratory study is located within the interpretivist paradigm and makes use of appropriate qualitative methods. It is therefore important at this point to consider two of the prevalent paradigmatic choices in educational research and explain the choice of the best approach for the current research.

Research in education is about conducting systematic investigations to explore phenomena in depth that can be interpreted by different conceptions and interpretations, comprising different philosophical positions or paradigms (Pring, 2000; Bryman, 2008). A paradigm is a theoretical perspective that reflects on how the researcher is going to approach the research, how research is designed, how

data is collected and how results are analysed and discussed (Grix, 2010; Creswell, 2014). A paradigm may be defined according to four elements, which are ontology, epistemology, methodology and method (Cohen et al., 2013). The first two elements represent the theoretical framework of the researcher, whereas the last two represent the approaches, strategies and tools for collecting the research data. Although different paradigms are mentioned in the research literature, however, the following sections will consider two of them as they are the prevailing ones in the educational research. Thereafter, a clear justification will be given to the choice of the underpinning paradigm in the current research.

The first common paradigm in educational research is the positivist paradigm, mostly associated with or based on scientific method, which treats the social world as value free and objectively verifiable (Crotty, 2009; Cohen et al., 2013). It assumes that reality and knowledge can be seen and measured through tools such as experiment and observation. Therefore, “there is no place for what is not observable or empirical” (Pring, 2000, p.91). Positivism is mainly concerned with objective verification of realities, replication and generalizations or laws through controlled variables, and seeks to correlate them, refute a hypothesis or validate it objectively (Punch, 2013). The ontological assumption of the positivist paradigm is realism about the social world as physical and tangible; it exists independently of our minds. The epistemological stance of the positivist is objectivism. This means that the researcher can be detached from the reality under observation; positivists separate themselves from the world of the study. One of the major criticisms of positivism is that it strips social sciences of what defines the social world, including the feelings and voices of participants and researchers (Cohen et al., 2013). Positivism can thus be seen as treating human behaviour as passive, controllable and determinable which is not the intent of the current research where TESOL

teachers will speak through their reported experiences and how do they perceive the concept of teacher leadership in their context. I therefore have not used a positivist paradigm, as it neither fits the research aims nor answers the research questions, though it is useful to set out its characteristics here in order to highlight the contrast with the interpretivist paradigm that has been adopted. My standpoints will be shown in the following section, as a contrast to the positivist paradigm.

The contrasting paradigm that underpins the current research, then, is interpretivist. It acknowledges that knowledge is personally experienced, and reality is perceived, understood and interpreted by people in society, rather than acquired or imposed from outside (Creswell, 2007). The interpretivist paradigm is based on a relativist ontological stance, which assumes that reality can be constructed socially and experientially, and adheres epistemologically to subjective principles that assume the entrenchment of subjectivity in meaning-making processes (Cohen et al., 2013). Its principles thus assist the current research in studying teacher leadership by interacting with teachers in their actual social context, public schools. Ontologically, Saudi English-language teachers' multiple views constitute the reality of teacher leadership as it is understood and experienced by them. Epistemologically in this study, I interact with teachers about teacher leadership in their professional setting. As it is implicit in my research questions, participants were asked to speak about teacher leadership from their point of view and how this constructs their understanding of themselves as teacher leaders. Based on their ontologically multiple views, teacher leadership practices have been explored through participants' construction of their meanings of the concept of teacher leadership.



Methodologically, this research is exploratory in design, and aims to make sense of “phenomena from the perspectives of people involved” (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p.189). As a methodological design, it is used when less research has been done about the topic under research and the context being studied. Creswell (2014) states that in an exploratory research design “the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard” p.61. It is used when a phenomenon has not been explored or defined in a social context. I studied teacher leadership as a multi-viewed phenomenon that has not been researched in the context of the current study. The purpose of the research is about the exploration of the “teacher leadership” in its lived experience of TESOL teachers and how this might influence their professional practice. As the reviewed literature on teacher leadership (Chapter 3, section 3.2) suggested that previous research has not defined the concept with a universal definition, this implies that teacher leadership is a phenomenon that holds different realities in the lived experiences of people and appears to be situational (Muijs & Harris, 2006; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). DeMore Palmer (2011) stressed that “The term teacher leadership might have particular meanings in diverse contexts. Those contexts, in conjunction with the teacher leaders themselves, may contribute to various definitions of teacher leadership” p.5.

Therefore, the constructed multi-realities of Saudi TESOL teachers and my own personal and professional experience about teacher leadership are in consistent with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning the current research. This is to say that from an ontologically interpretivist perspective the intention of the research was to explore teacher leadership from the multiple views of the participants, and that therefore epistemologically the data is regarded as constructed through the

reciprocal perspectives and the reported experiences of both researcher and participants.

To this end, the current research utilized questions that were “directed to the participants’ experiences, perceptions and convictions about the theme in question” (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 196). Thus the findings that the data might reveal in this exploratory study are “rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings” (Kensit, 2000, p. 104), as one of the feature of an exploratory study, and avoid imposing pre-formed ideas onto the research subjects and the data collected. In-depth understanding of the “lived experience” of people (Richards, 2003, p18) about the concept of teacher leadership contributes to the authenticity and credibility of the research by giving a voice to the participants and avoiding the imposition of existing concepts or norms. The questions of the current research (Chapter 1, section 1.3) solicited participants’ interpretations of their own experience and their constructed perceptions of teacher leadership to gain an understanding of individual experience (Creswell, 2014).

Observing the teachers in meetings or whilst teaching in classes may have been interesting in order to see teachers’ beliefs-in-action, which the present research does not have access to. But this would have shifted the focus away from giving a voice to teachers about how they conceive of their leadership; indeed, moving towards evaluating the teachers in their practice would not have been coherent with the research aims and the subsequent research questions devised.

Based on the underpinning paradigm and its exploratory nature, the current research utilized three qualitative methods which will be discussed in the following sections.

## 4.2 Data collection methods

The current study utilized an exploratory research design. The research used three qualitative data collection methods, namely focus groups, interviews and reflective essays. The language of instruction is English and the flow of discourse was also in English in all the three data set, although participants were given the choice to use or shift to their Arabic language. Each method was designed to answer the research questions, which are incorporated into all of the data collection methods used (see Chapter 1, section 1.3). Creswell (2014) explained that face-to-face interviews and written experiences are two ways to collect data about a phenomenon under study.

The three data collection methods were used sequentially in two phases (Creswell, 2014). The focus groups, as phase one, guided and informed the following stages, as their findings were first used in constructing the semi-structured interviews, and the same participants thereafter provided reflective essays on the topic (see Figure 4).

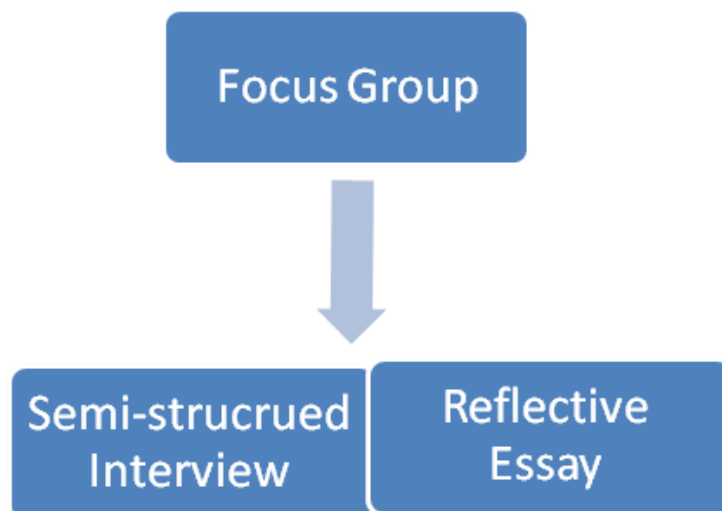


Figure 4: Sequential Phases of Data Collection

The next section will provide an explanation for each of these data sources and the way they helped me in providing detailed information about the views of participants and their reported practices that relate to teacher leadership in their schools.

#### 4.2.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups can be defined as a group interview "who have a common interest or characteristic, assembled by a moderator, who uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about a particular issue" (William and Catz, 2001, p.46). It provides a comfortable environment in which attitudes, experiences and ideas can be shared socially (Kruger & Casey, 2000) and voices of professionals in their everyday experienced lives can be heard (Williams & Katz, 2001). The focus group is therefore coherent with the research aims and the exploratory nature of the study (Bryman, 2008). The major strength of a focus group is its ability to elicit opinions, attitudes, and beliefs held by the participants and to conduct member checks. This is indicated by Kleiber (2004) who asserted that:

the data generated are very rich as ideas build and the participants explain why they feel the way they do. The researcher has an opportunity to listen in on the participant's conversation and gather data that would not be available through individual interviews or surveys. (p. 97)

In educational research, Williams & Katz (2001) note the relevance of focus groups for gaining the perspectives of a particular group of stakeholders – teachers in the case of this research – and also to ascertain the relevance of certain concepts used in a particular community. Focus groups were used by Jones (2007) in a previous study on teacher leadership, which study highlighted the usefulness of member checking interview data within the group.

Indeed, if teacher leadership is to become more prevalent in the future, what exactly this means requires discussion among colleagues. Previously reported empirical data suggest the importance of shared beliefs on teacher leadership so that shared goals can be worked towards (Muijs & Harris, 2007). This means that participants in this study could build on and respond to each other's contributions and ideas. Collaborative work among TESOL teachers is an established way to solve problems in their practice, meaning that focus groups would be an accessible method for participants as they are particularly useful for showing both consensus and divergence in viewpoints.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, my role as moderator was limited to intervening when appropriate with non-directive questions and topic suggestions (Freitas et al., 1998) (see Appendix A). This is to minimise any influence of predetermined influence on the findings. Prior to the start of the discussion in the two focus groups (of four and five members respectively), participants were made aware of the topic of the research, teacher leadership. The focus groups were conducted in a classroom of one of the schools, at a time mutually convenient for participants. Each of the focus groups met once for a total of one hour. The participants already knew each other and the moderator, and appeared comfortable enough to discuss the topic freely. The participants sat on chairs in a small open circle with the moderator, who placed an audio recorder on a table in clear view. All focus group data were collected and transcribed in English. After this, transcripts were shown to participants so that they could verify whether they agreed that what they had said was a true reflection of their standpoint.

Being a discussion with other people, this is likely to affect what people say and how much they say it (Kleiber, 2004). This could be an advantage or a

disadvantage depending on whether it has facilitated or constrained honest disclosure; however, triangulation through interviews and reflective writing can address this.

Data gained from this phase, this will be discussed in section 4.5, helped construct the following phase of data collection, the semi-structured interview.

#### **4.2.2 Semi-structured interview**

According to Robson (2002), interviews are particularly useful as they allow individuals to express their opinions and experiences using their own expressions and language they are comfortable with. The teachers' personal insights are given, which may offer additional insights that were not disclosed in the focus group. In terms of the design of the interviews, Robson (2002) distinguished between three types of interviews as follows: Firstly, a fully structured interview has predefined questions with fixed wording, usually in a pre-established order. Secondly, a semi-structured interview has predefined questions, but the order or phrasing can follow what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be modified and explanations given; specific questions which seem inappropriate for a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones can be included. Thirdly, in unstructured interviews the interviewer has a general area but lets the conversation develop within this area.

Semi-structured interviews have been judged to be the most appropriate for the study since they best permit knowledge to be explored and constructed by the participants within the parameters of guiding theoretical frameworks and themes suitable to the interpretivist stand-point. This helped the current research provide more in-depth details regarding the research questions following the focus groups as it helped the flow of discussion among the participants to be flexible to

elaborate on their perceptions and the reported experiences about teacher leadership. The interviews were conducted in the same location as the focus groups and consisted of several open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The interview had no time limit; however, each interview took between 45 minutes and an hour. As per the focus groups, all interview data were collected and transcribed in English and member-checked.

#### **4.2.3 Reflective essays**

This method is a mainstream tool in qualitative research, in which participants provide a narrative reflection on the specific phenomenon of the research topic (Jasper, 2005). In this study the exercise aimed to reveal narrative experience of Saudi TESOL teachers about the concept of teacher leadership in their school context. The same participants from focus groups and interviews volunteered to e-mail their reflective writing at their own convenience in either Arabic or English (see Appendix C). All the participants chose to write in English.

In the focus groups, participants spoke to each other; in the interviews, individually to the interviewer, and the final process – the reflective writing stage – can be said to represent participants' internal dialogue with themselves (Smith, 1999). There are several benefits to using focus group as a data collection method. Firstly, the writing process allows participants to re-arrange their ideas. Secondly, it can encourage critical thinking and reflection on the issues, which is necessary in a context where teacher leadership is largely absent, as discussed in Chapter 2, and potential roles and experiences need to be envisioned. Finally, it leaves a “tangible audit trail” (Jasper, 2005) which in the case of this study, can be used alongside the orally-elicited data of both the focus group and the semi-structure interview.

In TESOL, Farrell (2013, p. 470) notes the benefits of reflective journal writing to both the researcher and participants in terms of the quality of insights by “allowing time for teachers to organize their thoughts so that they can consciously explore and analyse their practice in a more organized fashion than they would normally do.” Gaining access to teachers’ perspectives after they have thought through an issue at length, in their focus groups and interviews, can assist them in making explicit what might have remained implicit in less reflective communications.

One shortcoming that has been noted is that individual bias and distortion of issues can emerge in reflective essays, thereby questioning their truthfulness (Jasper, 2005). To address this, they were triangulated with focus groups and interviews; there is interest in the ways teachers depict themselves as teacher leaders and do they perceive teacher leadership, and whether this is consistent or different between data collection stages.

### **4.3 Trialling the data collection methods**

Prior to the study, topics of the focus group and the proposed questions for the interview and the reflective essays were trialled with three Saudi TESOL EdD students from Exeter University, who were teachers of English Language in KSA. Modifications were made to questions where any ambiguity was detected. The participants in the pilot showed their eagerness about the importance of the research topic; however, they mentioned that there is a lack of professional knowledge and professional practice of teacher leadership in KSA. This consultation with my fellow students at Exeter led me to change my research design from four data collections stages to the three presented in this chapter. I had originally envisaged a documentation collection stage to gain an overview of current practices of teacher leadership in Saudi Arabia, but it emerged from the



piloting that there was insufficient material available to make this step necessary or effective. Trialling the questions in this way also helped me to plan a scene-setting meeting with the proposed participants before involving them in the actual data gathering process. This involved presenting the area of teacher leadership and its practices in other contexts to the participants of the current research. The discussion with my colleagues also confirmed the importance of the use of the focus group as a good technique for initiating the discussion about their perceptions and the reported experiences about the topic under research.

The following section will describe the setting of the research and the chosen participants.

#### **4.4 Research Setting and participants**

The current research was based in a single educational directorate in Saudi Arabia, Alleith Educational Directorate. It was chosen purposively as I have been working there since 2000, and the city is the place where I live. This made access to the participants easier. The directorate was established in 1980 as one of the directorates of Makkah Province.

The number of male and female students are 31345 and both male and female teachers are 4668. However, in KSA, where education is split into single-sex schools, as discussed in Chapters 2, it was difficult to communicate with female teaching staff in their school and do one-to-one interviews and focus groups. Therefore, although my initial research design intended to include teachers of both sexes, I was limited to conducting the research with only male participants, due to the Islamic and cultural regulations where I have no access to the female schools to interview the female teachers, as this discussed among the limitations in

Chapter 7, section 7.5. As the study aimed at studying the views of the male teachers, Table 1 below shows specifically this data.

Table 1: Population of Education Directorate

	Primary	Intermediate	Secondary
Students	7017	4197	3144
Teachers	998	658	422
Schools	116	72	35

There are two supervision offices with 150 supervisors. Each supervisor has an average of 50 to 70 teachers to visit every year. A single case study of a school was initially considered, given the advantage of exploring a single context in depth (Merriam, 1998). However, teachers from five different schools were finally included in the study to ensure that the richness in variations of experiences among schools could be analysed. The five schools have been chosen for this study according to the following criteria: firstly, the schools were located inside the directorate to enable collection of the required data within the allocated time, and secondly following consultation with officials at the directorate about the schools' effectiveness in leadership practices, according to their annual evaluation criteria.

The participants consist of nine male Saudi English-language teachers from the Alleith Educational Directorate. They have been chosen based on purposive and convenience sampling (Cohen et al., 2013; Silverman, 2013). They are Saudi English-language teachers who are teaching English language in Saudi intermediate and secondary public schools. They are assessed by their supervisors as among the best in their commitment to their teaching as a

profession and to their school development. They also participated in different supervision activities such as modelling lesson for their colleagues and peers. None of them worked in school leadership positions, as headteachers, in their schools or elsewhere as the system does not allow teachers from subjects of high demand to be leaders, as in the TESOL case. The participants had a range of years of experience, from two to six years. The relatively low time in service among participants reflects the centralized education system mentioned in Chapter 2, in which teachers are reallocated by the MoE to fit the demand for subject teachers in schools. This instability of the teaching profession forms a part of the discussion in Chapter 6. Table 2 below lists details of the participants:

**Table 2: Participants' Details**

School	Level	Participant's Pseudonym name	Years of experience
A	Intermediate	Ali	6
B	Secondary	Kahid	4
		Tariq	3
		Kamal	2
C	Intermediate	Saleh	5
		Nasser	6
D	Intermediate	Thamer	3
E	Secondary	Raed	5
		Ziad	4

To maintain confidentiality of participants and schools, no information has been written about them, and pseudonyms have been used for anonymity; the research ethics in section 4.7 presents other related measures taken to protect and encourage participants.

## 4.5 Data analysis

Given the quantity of rich data an exploratory studies gather; it is important to process this using the most suitable analysis technique. Having collected the data qualitatively, the process of presenting and analysing such voluminous data is challenging (Creswell, 2007). The huge amount of data, as shown in Table 3 below, is anticipated as one of the threats that researchers will face and need to respond to accordingly (Bryman, 2008).

Table 3: Summary of the collected data

Type of data		Word count of the collected data
Focus Group	Focus group 1	4683
	Focus group 2	5360
Interview Data	Interviewee 1	2238
	Interviewee 2	2401
	Interviewee 3	1860
	Interviewee 4	2630
	Interviewee 5	2080
	Interviewee 6	2578
	Interviewee 7	2917
	Interviewee 8	2190
	Interviewee 9	2639
Reflective essay	Reflective essay 1	654
	Reflective essay 2	702
	Reflective essay 3	820
	Reflective essay 4	440
	Reflective essay 5	390
	Reflective essay 6	620

	Reflective essay 7	460
	Reflective essay 8	380
	Reflective essay 9	540
		36202

Thus, the data analysis processes followed the following stages, modelled on Creswell (2014): preparing and organizing, data reading and coding, data reduction and data interpretation and representation.

The qualitative data collected were analysed using thematic analysis, which focuses on emergent themes. This technique was chosen due to its suitability in discovering patterns of themes generated from the analyses of the interviewees' data (Creswell, 2005). Whilst predetermined codes were considered due to the inductive categories embedded in the research questions, it was decided that a more inductive approach was appropriate so that themes could emerge from the data itself (Strauss, 1987) and explain the phenomenon of teacher leadership as perceived by teachers. The data analysis process in the current study has a number of similarities to other qualitative studies on teacher leadership, such as DeMore Palmer (2011) and Burke (2009). All the coding processes were done using Nvivo-10 for categorizing the data, generating nodes. I first created a structure for the project, which entailed creating folders and subfolders, e.g. a folder for the interviews, focus group and the reflective essays. I imported all the transcripts into relevant subfolders. Nvivo which is an analysis technique for qualitative data that produced codes and themes helped me answer the research questions as an efficient way of coding the data by viewing transcripts and selecting words or sentences and dragging and dropping them into respective Nodes (themes). Given that thematic analysis is a recursive process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), when reading through the transcripts, I created additional Nodes

and child nodes after I had an extensive list of themes, which after re-reading the text I deleted or merged with others. Thematic analysis is congruent with the methodological choice of the exploratory study which examines the clustering of units of meaning to form themes and sub-themes (see Nodes in Appendix J). I started with the major themes that emerged from the focus groups, interviews and the reflective essays and benefited from themes supported by the literature. The data were synthesised to form the key understandings of the research questions. As an example from the Nodes in Appendix J, a theme has been coded as a “node” “teacher’s voice” as appeared in one of the responses to research question 4. The precise nature of this process in the present study will now be explained.

Firstly, the data from the two focus groups were analysed to produce a thorough understanding of the data about teacher leadership in the context of education policy, and how teachers are positioned as leaders. Then, the analysed data from the two focus groups guided the semi-structured interviews. After conducting the interviews, I read them one by one and on multiple occasions, to gain an understanding of the main ideas or opinions expressed by the interviewees; this had been facilitated by using Nvivo as stated previously. I was able see emerging codes and could categorize the ideas. If the theme was too broad, more subthemes were created to further analyse the ideas and gain deeper understanding (Morse & Field, 1996). This structure of themes and subthemes is replicated in the arrangement and tables of Chapter 5. Finally, the reflective essays were coded using the same method as the interviews.

In all the above stages, all of the data were saved during the collection and analysis phase to preserve them against any loss or damage. For example, I used

different channels to save them, such as Drop box, email and hard disk. The following sections will discuss issues of research data quality

#### **4.6 Research Quality Assurance**

Research data need to be validated to ensure their quality and rigour in conducting research, and that the study yields trustworthy and credible results. The process for ensuring the data quality of the current research had several aspects, which can be categorised as credibility, transferability and conformability (Creswell, 2014). The measures taken to address these specific points in this thesis are discussed below.

The credibility of the current research relates to the quality and trustworthiness of how the research was carried out. Bryman (2008) defines trustworthiness as the adoption of “a set of criteria advocated by some writers for assessing the quality of qualitative research” (p.700). These techniques and criteria are used to confirm applicability and consistency (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and provide a framework for quality assurance that suits the Interpretivist paradigm of this study, as opposed to standards of rigour and repeatability suited to a positivist approach. To support this, details of the research data collection methods have been explicitly provided, to enable the readers to see the steps implemented and their credibility. Additionally, while conducting the research, care was taken to make sure participants were informed about the research aims and process so that the information provided has maximum value. The participants’ knowledge of the context combined with the researcher’s 15 years of experience – constituting a prolonged period (Creswell, 2014) – in teachers’ issues and the educational context of Saudi Arabia, can lend credibility and authenticity of voice to the study. Participants were selected purposively based on specific criteria as indicted

earlier, they are also familiar with the context being researched, and made aware of the phenomenon under study in the scene-setting meeting mentioned earlier.

Further credibility assurance can be attained through well-designed and reported treatment of the data, including triangulation of data sets (Cohen et al., 2013). The three data collection methods used in this study were compared and used to inform how each was understood individually and collectively. This yielded multiple perspectives through the use of multiple data sets as mentioned earlier. Additionally, the three qualitative data sets can be a merit for this research as adopting a stance appropriate to the research context (Gray, 2014). The appropriateness of the study's design and materials – was established through piloting, my own knowledge of the context, and member checking. The data sets give a voice to the participants and avoiding the imposition of existing concepts or norms which contributes to the authenticity and credibility of the exploratory research. Additionally, rigorous checking of materials, for example to ward against transcription errors, and continuous attention being paid in the data collection and analysis stages to avoid shifts or drifts in meaning (Gibbs, 2007) when coding and deciding on themes. The use of Nvivo described earlier helped with maintaining the credibility of data in this way.

Another element which was considered in this research for data quality assurance is conformability. This as a process describes the extent to which the claims made in the study can be matched to the data collected, and the justification of the interpretation offered by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2013). I have provided numerous examples from the data in Chapter 5 in order to illustrate the themes identified in participants' responses, and have correlated the findings with previous studies to check that my interpretation is consistent with similar data and the



underlying theoretical framework. Furthermore, I am aware that being subjective in my interpretation as an interpretivist researcher might affect the interpreted data as I am insider researcher with experience I have about the context and the topic of the study. To overcome this, the study has established the conformability of the data by, firstly, the criteria I used to choose the participants as discussed in 4.4 was not based on my familiarity with participants and the context being studied, and secondly by creating an audit trail for the data, which included auditing the transcription of the data and member-checking of the interpretation with the participants.

Finally, in order to seek a rigour quality of the research that uses qualitative research data collection methods, a research should consider the aspect of the findings transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that appropriate transferability means recognising “the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it is transferred” (p.8). Showing the context, character and difficulties of working in the specific context of the Saudi public school system, will also aid the transferability of the methods and findings to other comparable contexts (Merriam, 2009). For instance, there is good reason to see the findings of this thesis as transferable to other directorates in Saudi Arabia, or to a large extent other parts of the Arab World, but the particular cultural context described in Chapter 2 should warn against assuming the outcomes could be repeated in a radically different setting; as a qualitative study, transferability rather than generalizability is the aim (Cohen et.al, 2013). The applicability of the findings beyond similar contexts – is established through suitably modest treatment of the findings with respect to their transferability, and by providing the reader with sufficient information.

The previous steps of data design and analysis as well as the data quality assurance had been considered in parallel with the following research ethics to ensure that the current research follows research code of practice and likewise for the rigorous data quality.

#### **4.7 Research ethics**

This research follows ethical procedures in the social sciences and adheres to those laid down for doctoral projects at the University of Exeter, and standard practices approved by the British Research Ethics Association (BREA). Prior to commencing this study, I applied for and received the necessary ethical approval and permission from the University, followed by approval and permission from the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. Following this initial permission, I approached participants and conducted the research in an ethically aware way: participants in the study were provided with information about the nature of the research, along with a consent form to be signed by those who agree to take part in the interview or who agree that the researcher may examine their profile in their schools. Participants had the right to withdraw their information and stop their participation at any given time. Copies of the relevant permissions and forms are given in Appendices G-I.

Confidentiality is another major issue in ethical research according to Wiles et al. (2008) who stressed that researchers should ensure and preserve confidentiality as an ethical consideration in their research. I therefore informed the participants about the ethical consideration needed for their participation in the study. After being introduced to the study and its goals, they signed an informed consent form, where they also learned that they would be given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. In the same form, the participants were also asked

to consent to take part in the study, informed about the tape-recording of the interview and the focus group data collection methods. They were free to withdraw at any point. Interviews and focus group were audio-recorded with permission from the participants. At the end of their participation all participants were thanked, and all had the chance to raise any issues or ideas with regards to the study, or any other concerns, through my email contact, which was provided. Throughout, every effort was made to ensure that the participants felt comfortable in terms of the timetable and setting of the research. The attempt to ensure a safe and open environment was facilitated through participants' familiarity with the researcher, the setting and the advanced notice given of the topic. Creswell (2014) also raises the importance of informing participants about the risks and benefits of the research to participants. Given the top-down structures of education currently in place in Saudi Arabia, some participants may have had concerns that their comments on teacher leadership would be considered subversive. To avoid self-censorship, it was important that participants understood my desire for the development of teacher leadership roles and the connection of this to the overall development of education in Saudi Arabia. The opportunity that this presented for them to make their voices heard, supported by scientific research, was made clear. The advantage of knowing this, I believe, allowed participants to frame and contextualise their constructive comments, mitigating any perceived risk to themselves whilst emphasising the potential benefit.

#### **4.8 Summary**

The qualitative nature of the three data collection methods described above has garnered in-depth data that meets the scope of the research questions. The interpretivist assumptions and all the related ontological, epistemological and

methodological assumptions underpinning the research have been considered, and managed accordingly. A description of the data analysis procedures has been also provided, together with accounts of the necessary validation and ethical considerations, which are important to ensure a robust methodological approach. Appendices providing examples of the processes involved have been indicated in the relevant sections.

Making clear the design of this research and how it has been carried out ensures that the findings can be regarded as credible. The methodology adopted has been justified and has shaped the responses gathered from participants to make sure they are appropriate to addressing the research aims and informing the subsequent recommendations. The following chapter presents the data revealed by the above analysis procedures and discusses the findings in relation to the research questions that guide this study.

## Chapter Five: Research Findings

The previous chapter has dealt with the research design and data analysis process. The purpose of the current chapter is to present and analyse the research findings. The sections will be organized according to the themes that have been identified in the data, and their relation to the research questions outlined in Chapter One. In turn, the questions establish the participants' conceptions of, practice of, obstructions to and desire for teacher leadership roles, producing an overall image of dedicated but under-trained professionals, who see multiple benefits to leadership roles and their own capacity to perform them, but whose opportunities and experience are limited.

Following the collection and analysis process discussed in Chapter Four, the themes are coordinated from the three data sets, where these triangulate and support each other through themes identified within all of them. The themes were emergent as I avoided pre-determined categories for them. Figures and tables are used below to illustrate the themes that appeared in the findings related to each question. For each of the themes identified, a table is given, along with related sub-themes and examples from the responses. The chapter presents each of the themes separately, to facilitate understanding the data gathered, but links between themes are noted, especially where these relate to aspects of theoretical and conceptual framework. Presenting these in-depth descriptions of the different themes of teacher leadership, professional practice and the Saudi context, as reported by participants, prepares the ground for the next chapter, in which a detailed discussion of the themes takes place, establishing connections to existing literature and the thesis' theoretical framework.

## 5.1 Understanding the concept of teacher leadership

To recognize the current and desired practices of teacher leadership in the Saudi educational context, the research attempted first to set the scene by asking the participants what is meant by teacher leadership in their views. The first research question addresses the following: 'How do Saudi English-language teachers in KSA perceive the concept of teacher leadership?'

Teachers in this research perceived the concept from several angles, as the data from all three data sets reveals. Teachers' understanding of the concept of teacher leadership covered three important areas in the context of their teaching and learning situations in school. These areas are as follows: practices inside the classroom, practices beyond the classroom and practices that relate to their teacher knowledge and professionalism. The three different areas are interrelated as they represent the core responsibility areas of teachers' roles in their profession, as mapped in Figure 5 below.

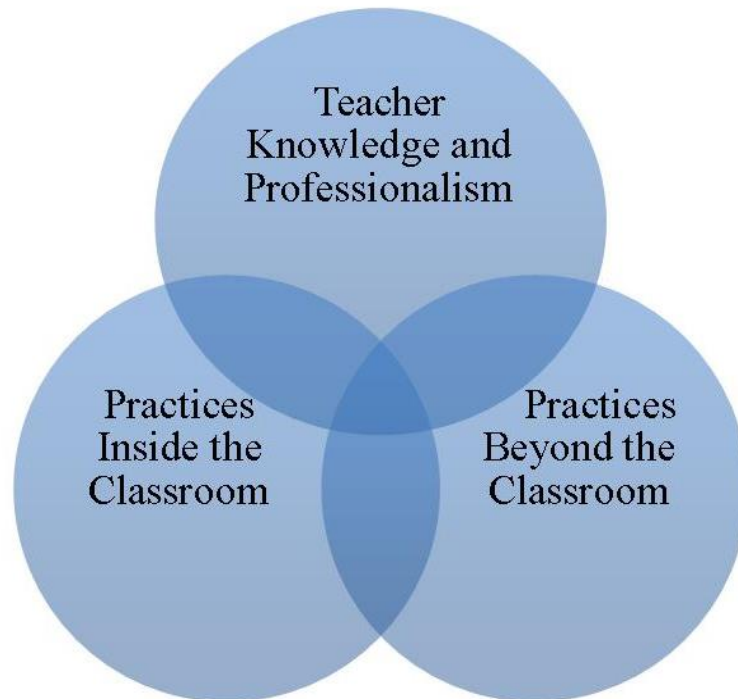


Figure 5: Aspects of Teacher Leadership

### 5.1.1 Teacher Leadership in Relation to Practices inside the Classroom

The most prominent of the three core areas outlined by the teachers was that the concept of teacher leadership relates to their practices inside the classroom. The following quotes in Table 4 are from teachers who recounted that the teacher leadership as a concept falls inside the domain of classroom, with direct relation to their students, teaching strategies, and control and class management.

Table 4: Teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership in relation to Practices inside the Classroom

Sub-Theme	Sample Responses	No. of responses
Relation with students	<p><i>"Your way to make a relation with student, to make this student likes your teaching and subject; I think this leadership, on teacher leadership. So this is about the way teachers contact and relate to their students"</i> (Khalid, Focus Group [hereafter FG]).</p> <p><i>"The teacher leadership is a guide in front of his students, he must get the students...if he succeeds his work in his students' interactions it means he will be leader in his work in the school".</i> (Ali, Reflective Essay [hereafter RE]).</p>	8
Teaching Strategies	<p><i>"Teacher leadership is where the teacher can give the student a new way, new method, do not want only information, information maybe the student gets anyway and they have to treat or make a student a good leader, maybe a small leader."</i> (Thamer, Interview [hereafter Int])</p> <p><i>"The teacher leadership relates to the effective teacher who develops performance and achieves the highest level of success in the classroom. Teachers also can select from alternatives to identify the best."</i> (Khalid, Focus Group [hereafter FG])</p>	5
Control and class Management	<p><i>"Controlling the students' discipline, controlling everything inside your classroom."</i> (Nasser, Int)</p> <p><i>"He must be firm without violence and he should have the ability to successfully deal with daily situations with students."</i> (Raed, Int)</p>	7

One of the recurring themes in the participants' perception of teacher leadership is the importance of the teacher's "relationship with their students", which includes classroom interaction and pastoral care. Khalid in the focus group held the view that teacher leadership as a concept refers to the teacher's relation with students



inside the classroom by stressing the need to: "*make a relation with students*". This he associated with succeeding "*to make this student likes your teaching and subject*". He believed that teacher leadership begins inside the classroom, with being able to make lessons enjoyable as well as informative forming part of a teacher's professional pedagogy. As a similar consequence of this view of professional teaching, Ali in his RE also related teacher leadership to teachers being "*a guide*" to make a success of "*students' interactions*". This kind of teacher leadership concentrates on the relationship between teachers and students during their learning and teaching. Ali provided an example when asked about this in particular, he said:

*I am using the strategy of gaining my students motivation by negotiating their learning problems, I also provide them with some gifts as probing their performance inside my classes. I always try my best to be nearer to them as this adding to their learning and my teaching.*

The reported actions can be seen as informal roles of teachers, however, they see this as strategies to build relations with their students. Building the appropriate relationship with students is considered important, as Ali reported, the discussion of the benefits of teacher leadership later in this chapter also shows. Eight teachers had similar views to Khalid and Ali, which shows their emphasis on their personal and social capital in their relations with their students, and which they can capitalise on through their teaching strategies.

Indeed, "Teaching strategies" were explicitly identified as important to the understanding of teacher leadership in the responses of five participants. This included teacher's professional practice in the classroom, such as teaching style, use of resources and how teachers mediate the presentation of material for their students. These are clearly pertinent issues for TESOL practitioners given the

different pedagogical options available and existing methodological debates. Thamer, in the one-to-one interview, opined that pedagogical choices and the teaching strategies of teachers are attributes of the concept of teacher leadership, finding a “new method” for teaching, not presenting “only information”. Similarly, Khalid in FG linked the way a teacher “develops performance” to the ability to “select from alternatives to identify the best”, meaning approaches to teaching in the classroom. Ziad in his interview confirmed this as he reported that:

*“I don’t wait for supervisors to tell me what to do. Yes, I consult the teacher’ guide book but I develop my teaching techniques from my experience. This is my teaching and my classroom”.*

Although he knows the boundaries of his choice because of the sponsored supervision and the doctrine of the Teacher’s Guide book that is given to teachers, however, he is able to practice his professional agency to choose among the pedagogical choices of his teaching.

One final frequently mentioned aspect of the teacher’s understanding of teacher leadership is the “control and discipline” he is able to instil in the classroom. Seven teachers identified this aspect in their responses. Unlike Thamer and Khalid’s prioritising of teaching strategies, Nasser, for example, emphasises how teacher leadership relates to a class management role and “*controlling the students’ discipline*” inside the classroom. Discipline was also a theme for Raed, who mentioned that teacher leadership involved being “*firm without violence*” in daily interaction with students in the classroom. Although both these participants’ views of teacher leadership are still classroom-based, they looked at the managerial role of teachers inside their classrooms, as seen in the importance placed on control. This is emphasized explicitly by Raed in his interview who stated that:

*“I sometimes do not send the indiscipline students to headteachers. I try at the beginning but most of the times headteachers only signed them on papers. Finally,*

*I decided to practice my role and solve this in my classroom. Day after day, students know about my rules and coping with them”.*

In his quote, Raed realized that his own class management worked better than the headteacher's in his school. This as a way of dealing with his class discipline accustomed his students to the rules of discipline. This managerial aspect of teacher leadership can be connected to the decisional capital teachers need in their professional (teaching strategies) and social (student relationship) roles. This is also reported in Saleh's interview who mentioned that:

*Inside the classroom I have the power to create new ideas to help my student. It's giving me self-confident. Ability to solve my class's problems whatever the problem with my students, equipment, curriculum and etc. I can also be going to development case and be able to think deeply of How can I improve my students' levels.*

It is not surprising to see the different choices as stated above by teachers due to go beyond the boundaries of the centralised and bureaucratic top-down system as discussed in Chapter 2. However, the TESOL teachers relate these aspects of their actions inside their classroom and how these theorise their perception of teacher leadership

The next section deals with a second core area of teachers' understanding of teacher leadership, moving beyond the boundaries of their classrooms.

### **5.1.2 Teacher leadership in relation to practices beyond the classroom**

Further relating to research question one, some of the teachers demonstrated an understanding of teacher leadership through the nature and impact of their interactions beyond their classroom (see Table 5). Although largely a subsidiary concern to classroom practice, participants still noted the importance of their work in the wider school, and the complex relations between different sections of the institution, as the data from this chapter and the discussion in Chapter 6 repeatedly show. The sub-themes in the table group the responses into: Help and

Support for Colleagues and Help School Community, illustrating how teacher leadership is conceived as having both professional and social aspects.

Table 5: Teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership in relation to Practices beyond the Classroom

Sub-Theme	Sample Responses	No. of Responses
Help and support for colleagues	<p><i>"Teacher leadership needs to go beyond their classroom or to help the other teachers so they have maximum possibility inside the classrooms for the school benefit."</i> (Kamal, Reflective Essay [hereafter RE])</p> <p><i>"Sure I want yourself to take on these roles with colleagues, I mean more than teaching."</i> (Saleh, Int)</p> <p><i>"You understand that if you work with other teachers, especially your colleagues, at the same time you have good teacher leadership."</i> (Ali, FG2)</p>	5
Help school community	<p><i>"To help their school community and education in general to be excellent in achieving their goals, all these elements."</i> (Raed, Int)</p> <p><i>"My teacher leadership roles affect the school area and outside school with my society."</i> (Ziad, FG1)</p>	4

Collegiality refers to the working relationships between teachers in a school, which may include providing mutual help and support. Five participants defined teacher leadership as covering roles for teacher leaders to go beyond their daily teaching inside their classroom, and provide help and support for their colleagues. For example, Kamal in his reflective essay indicated that teacher leadership as a concept can go "beyond their classroom" to maximize the informal roles of teacher leadership, by offering help to "other teachers". This collaboration among teachers can maximise their social capital and build their professional knowledge towards a community of practice. Notably, the descriptions given of this assistance for colleagues predominantly take the form of informal roles rather than formal ones, showing that teacher leader is not restricted to appointed roles. Kamal's linking of helping colleagues back to the benefits in the classroom is fairly typical of

teachers' focus, and shows the interrelations of the different areas of the school environment, as will be discussed again in relation to the benefits of teacher leadership. Ali in the FG confirms what Kamal says, connecting working with others with leadership. However, Saleh in his interview further conceives of a clearly defined role in helping teachers which is "more than teaching", which suggests that teacher leadership could in his view have a managerial aspect in dealing with colleagues. This may parallel the ideas of relationships with students mentioned in section 5.1.1.1, but among colleagues rather than students; leadership can have benefits which stretch beyond the boundaries of a single classroom, towards the community of practice among teachers, and the wider school community. This is also evidenced with example from Thamer's interview:

*"I help my colleagues with their problem. we can share information with each other. For example, we meet to solve problems and putt strategies for English writing skill. So we are like health workers in hospitals specialist, technician and consultant. New teachers are listening to my advices because I'm the expert teacher"*

The help that he provided to his colleagues especially the new ones cover wide range of activities, whether advice on their students' problems, teaching strategies or any aspect of consultancy, as he made analogies to doctors in hospitals or technicians. This means he perceived teacher leadership as way to develop their teaching as a profession that has professional aspects like those physicians and consultants. This develops their professional practice and professional capital to provide different aspects of the professional support and help for their colleagues.

In most of the responses, the school community is conceived of as including all members of the school – students and staff. Four of the participants held that the phenomenon of teacher leadership relates – usually through informal roles – to creating and sustaining the education environment within the school, again ultimately focused on the results this will have in the classroom. This is shown in

Raed's interview, who stated that teacher leadership relates to those teachers who can "help their school community and education". Similarly, Ziad in his focus group points to how teacher leadership has effects for "the school area and outside school". This suggests that while for some participants the community encompasses the school, for others a wider conception of community includes the society outside as well. One of the community supports is seen in Ali's reflective essay who narrated that:

*"I building support with parents and community, I see myself always caring about them and speak with parents during their visit to the school and my classrooms. This talk I feel help me to show them my role as teacher and benefit in the students' learning".*

Here, Ali explicitly retrieved an example from his experience about the kind of help he provided as a teacher that he saw an aspect of teacher leadership by providing support and help to the parents.

In either case, the teacher leader employs social and decisional capital to support and influence the school community, to share their collective leadership, knowledge and skills. The third area that respondents included in their definition of teacher leadership was teaching knowledge and professional development. This supports the teacher leadership roles within and beyond the classroom discussed above, through the professional capital and expertise that teacher leaders can call upon.

### **5.1.3 Teacher knowledge and professionalism**

How teachers operate in their teaching and their work generally is underpinned by their knowledge and professional practice, including subject knowledge, pedagogy and codes of practice. As a further definition of teacher leadership, the participants' emphasis on their professionalism was a particularly significant marker. Five teachers demonstrated an understanding of teacher leadership

through the development of teacher knowledge and professionalism, as discussed below via two sub-themes emerging from the discussions: CPD autonomy and Pedagogical agency (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership in relation to their Knowledge and Professionalism**

Sub-Theme	Sample Responses	No. of Responses
CPD autonomy	<p><i>"Teacher leadership can be described as teacher is able to choose teachers' training."</i> (Ali, FG)</p> <p><i>"From my point of view teacher leadership is to be as a teacher responsible for your teaching, responsible I mean you depend on yourself, in everything, so you feel that you can manage the class, manage the course, manage the marks and manage everything by yourself and finally evaluate yourself at the end."</i> (Tariq, Int)</p>	5
Pedagogical Agency	<p><i>"Teacher leadership is the effective teacher who develops performance and achieves the highest level of success. Teachers also can select from alternatives methods to identify the best."</i> (Ziad, FG)</p> <p><i>"The leader teacher is the one who manages and controls educational activities inside the classroom, the school and the surrounding environment (society)."</i> (Thamer, Int).</p> <p><i>"It is better for the teacher to adopt these procedures and practice agency, to plan and carry out teaching tasks according to certain regulations, but as a leader"</i> (Nasser, RE).</p>	6

As professionals, teachers seek continuous professional development, which can be seen in the importance placed on this area by five of the participants. Ali indicated in the focus group that being able to "choose teachers' training" is one of the facets of teacher leadership. Tariq in his interview pointed out the importance of professional autonomy; being responsible for one's training is essential for

being a professional teacher leader. He said that you have to be able to “*depend on yourself*” and “*evaluate yourself*”. This means both having control over one’s training and the ability to carry it out, hallmarks of an independent professionalism about one’s present and future practice. This professional autonomy, as one of the aspects of teacher leadership revealed in the data, indicates that teachers identify themselves as capable professionals in deciding what is best for them in relation to their CPD. Professional autonomy in their development subsequently relates to their professional agency in practice, as appears in the following section.

“Pedagogical agency” means being able to determine one’s teaching style and methods. As previously stated, Ziad (FG) thinks that teacher leadership can be described as being able to “*select from alternatives methods*” to be maximally effective in teaching and pedagogical performance. The capacity to make pedagogical choices and select teaching methodologies are two of the core elements of teacher leadership, and Ziad’s remark imply that his professional agency is important to decide on appropriate teacher education and training. This can be seen as another element of developing effective teacher leadership that enhances decisional and professional capital. This means the effective teacher leader is one who “*controls educational activities*”, as Thamer said in his interview. This extends to having the confidence and agency to “plan and carry out teaching tasks” while being trusted to do so appropriately according to the relevant “regulations”, as Nasser says in his reflective essay. The example of Saleh in section 5.1.1 about using his professional agency to go beyond of the regulation boundaries is a lived experience of the decisional capital teachers have as teacher leaders



The following section will present the findings that relate to the current and desired practices of teacher leadership in the Saudi public school, and how Saudi TESOL teachers' perceived definitions of the teacher leadership concept construct their views of its practices in their schools.

## **5.2 Current and Desired Practices and roles of Teacher Leadership**

After laying out teachers' views about the definition of the concept of teacher leadership, this section focuses on the second research question: What are the current and desired practices of teacher leadership in the Saudi public schools?

When asking participants about the roles and practices of teacher leadership that they assume, several divergent perspectives were offered. However, it was unanimous among participants that there are very few evident practices of teacher leadership for teachers within and beyond their schools. Perhaps as a result of this, participants talked more about the potential and desired roles for teacher leadership that need to be established and encouraged first in their contexts, and driven or configured by the MoE in Saudi Arabia.

The data revealed many potential and desired leadership roles both inside and beyond the classroom. The participants relate these roles to their definitions of the concept of teacher leadership discussed in research question one. The roles cover a wide range of responsibilities, reflecting the variety of aspects that teacher leadership is perceived to have. In line with the elicited responses, categorisations relate to the two themes of roles inside the classroom and roles outside the classroom, which will be reported in the following sections under their related sub-themes.

## 5.2.1 Teacher leadership roles inside the classroom

This section presents the teachers' views on the roles of teacher leadership inside the classroom. Although participants did not mention any particular formal and designated roles for EFL teacher leaders, a number of potential roles desired were described. These in-classroom roles are organised in Table 7 under the following categories: Practitioner, Facilitator and Controller.

Table 7: Teacher Leadership Roles inside the Classroom

Sub-theme	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Practitioner	<p><i>"We are talking about students first because you know the students are more important than teacher. This Ministry of Education says that okay, how to teach this subject [English] that is very important to students."</i> (Ali, FG)</p> <p><i>"I am trying to benefit from this technology, and apply them in my work to encourage my students inside and outside the class to build a good background about English and the importance of English language."</i> (Ali, Int)</p> <p><i>"The leader teacher makes decisions, conducts researches, and helps learners to acquire knowledge and skills upon scientific methodology."</i> (Saleh, FG)</p>	7
Facilitator	<p><i>"The leader teacher is a facilitator for the education process of his students inside the classroom."</i> (Thamer, Int)</p> <p><i>"The teacher has a great role - beside the family - to support a generation equipped with many skills."</i> (Khalid, RE)</p>	6
Controller	<p><i>"The leader teacher plays an active role to control and manage the educational activities inside and outside classrooms, and on the individual and group levels."</i> (Ziad, Int.)</p> <p><i>"The role of teacher leader is how to control the class. Yes, so how to control the class."</i> (Tariq, Int)</p>	7

The idea of the “practitioner” includes professional actions within the classroom; that is, direct and skilful transfer of knowledge and class management. The participants conceive of an effective practitioner as putting “students first” (Ali, FG), engaging them with the material “to build a good background” (Ali, Int), and being a well-organised and innovative teacher who “*helps learners to acquire knowledge and skills*” (Saleh, FG). This is mostly confined to their teaching practices with their students inside their classrooms, reflecting the priority given to students – “students first”, as Ali puts it (FG).

As distinct from the practitioner, a “facilitator” creates opportunities and directions for learning, with the focus more on the environment and skills-development than delivering content. Six participants acknowledged the role of teacher leaders in a facilitator role inside the classroom. Thamer in his interview and Khalid in his reflective essay stressed their capacity for guiding and encouraging students towards independent learning. Thamer talked about “*a facilitator for the education process*”, while Khalid saw the teacher leader as working to “*support a generation*” through facilitating their learning.

Underpinning the effective practitioner and facilitator is the role of “controller”, which draws on distinct skills to maintain discipline and focus in the classroom. Tariq explicitly linked being able to “control the class” with the idea of a teacher leader in his interview, while Ziad when interviewed described in more detail how this included management of “educational activities inside and outside classrooms”, and appropriate control at both “individual and group levels.”

Participants’ experiences that reported by Ali, Ziad and Raed in the data presented in 5.1.1 confirmed and evidenced their perceived roles inside their classrooms. As with the definitions of teacher leadership discussed earlier, participants also

referred to roles in which professional leadership capacities could be exercised outside their classrooms, as will be shown in the following theme.

### **5.2.2 Teacher Leadership Roles outside the Classroom**

Although the EFL teachers interviewed recognized that in Saudi Arabia roles of teacher leaders are almost exclusively manifested as those practised inside their classrooms with their students, four out of nine participants envisaged other roles beyond their classroom setting. These are listed in Table 8 below under the sub-themes of mediator and administrative liaison, mentor, extracurricular activities player and community builder.

Table 8: Teacher Leadership Roles outside the Classroom

Sub-theme	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
<i>Mediator and administrative liaison</i>	<i>"He must be active in the school, not just in his period of his class around his class, in broadcasting, encouraging colleagues and students, try to interact to the students was just in their books with some subject around the environment studies." (Khalid, FG)</i>	5
<i>Mentor</i>	<i>"Teachers are now serving as research colleagues, working as advisor-mentors to new teachers, and facilitating professional development activities as master teachers." (Kamal, RE).  "The colleagues see me what I am doing to my student and maybe he will benefit from my experience. Then may be new teacher will see other teacher do that things and so address about his student and then the new teacher may be influenced from all teachers who have experience." (Nasser, Int.)</i>	4
<i>Extracurricular activities player</i>	<i>"The leader teacher plays an active role to engage and manage the educational activities outside classrooms, and on the individual and group levels." (Tariq, Int)  "Any person, any wants to be leader, the best, always I want to work for my society" (Ali, FG).</i>	4
<i>Community Builder</i>	<i>"Teacher's society, if he can build his society... as a builder of his society with his colleagues, the management, if he can deal with the management... this is part of teacher leadership." (Ali, FG)</i>	3

Teachers recognised that leadership roles outside the classroom such as “mediator and administrative liaison” can be significant and relevant for the students inside the classroom, as well as for other teachers. This role could help the school community where the teacher acts as a liaison between their colleagues and the headteacher, and between teachers themselves, to facilitate interaction and communication among them. Khalid (FG) mentions a role teachers have in discussing broader issues beyond the subject discipline, whereas Ali in his

interview raised the following: *“The teacher leader must be a teacher himself and adviser, a provider for help in the school community and outside the school.”*

The data therefore draw attention to the need for teachers as professionals to lead by example in teamwork, collegiality and effective communication beyond their subject discipline, for the smooth running of the school and its network. For example, participants also viewed teacher leadership outside the classroom to include helping their colleagues by sharing their professional knowledge and best pedagogical and professional practices. Teacher leadership is identified as important between colleagues, both in terms of sharing their experience and developing best practices, and also in terms of mentoring newer, less experienced teachers. For example, Kamal stressed the help that teachers could offer each other as “advisor-mentors” and “master teachers”, while Nasser in his interview envisaged a model of veteran teachers sharing their experience with new teachers, who can in turn develop their practice and inform their colleagues. Ideally a *“new teacher may be influenced from all teachers who have experience.”* Ziad in his interview also supported mentoring and added that teacher leadership positions can extend to taking roles outside the classroom, to be a critical part in building the professional capacity of their colleagues and sharing best practice outside the classroom.

As well as seeing the potential for teaching professionals to mutually support each other’s work and development through leadership, several participants saw the teacher leader’s involvement in the school generally as vital. An important form of teacher leadership engagement which emerged from the findings (mentioned by four participants) is that of playing a role in “extracurricular activities” as well as teaching: those activities that enhance the learning experience alongside other

cultural, social, educational and physical activities, as argued by Tariq in his interview. This role can be utilized to designate informal roles for teachers to maximize their professional engagement in different school activities and reforms. Teachers are naturally keen to maximize their activities and standing, and Ali in his focus group reflected this in his professional commitment to lead and excel, saying he wanted to “*work for his [my] society*”.

Similarly to being involved in day-to-day activities, but perhaps with a longer-term focus, six teachers reported that they would like to be ‘community builders’. This would involve being part of the decision-making processes, where teacher leaders also operate with members of school-based leadership teams, instructional support teams and leaders of change. This response suggests that if administrative tasks are delegated to them by the headteachers, teachers also wish to participate in school improvement processes. Such roles are clear in the quotation above from Ali in his interview, who feels that there would be capacity for teacher leaders to work within a school society and with policy makers. Nasser reaffirmed this in his reflective essay, describing leadership roles as being exercised within the school community. The leader teacher is the one who manages and controls educational activities within the school and the surrounding environment, he is a “builder of his society”.

The implications and possibilities of such roles as evidenced by examples of their perceptions and reported experiences in section 5.1.2 are discussed in Chapter 7. Meanwhile in the following section, findings are presented that consider to what extent teachers consider themselves to be capable of enacting them through their teacher leadership, or how they do exhibit teacher leadership in the professional practice, irrespective of the availability of the roles discussed above. These

responses will also serve to illustrate further the definitions of teacher leadership given by participants, discussed in section 5.1, and how teachers relate themselves to this conception.

### **5.3 Teachers' Understanding of themselves as Teacher Leaders**

This section sets out the participants' answers that refer to the third research question: 'How do Saudi English-language teachers in KSA perceive themselves as teacher leaders?'. This follows naturally from a consideration of their understanding of the concept and the roles in which it might be fulfilled.

The data indicated that all teachers were enthusiastic and highly engaged when reflecting on their perceptions of themselves as teacher leaders. They repeatedly mentioned a common set of skills they believed necessary to be teacher leaders. The findings are reported under three main themes: personal skills, professional skills and decisional skills.

Participants recognized that teacher leaders need professional capital – human, social and decisional – if they are to maximise their effectiveness and act as agents of change in a situation where (as discussed in Chapter 2 and seen in the data in section 5.2) positional power and institutional authority are likely to be absent. This professional capital will simultaneously enable them to build relationships with their students, colleagues and headteachers.

#### **5.3.1 Personal Skills**

Various elements are reported as constituting the key capacities for effective teacher leaders' roles, among them skills that relate to the personal domain. The responses identified a range of personal skills that characterize teachers' ability to



act as teacher leaders. These can be categorised under the sub-themes of being Active, Friendly and Kind, and Patient.

Table 9: Personal Skills

Sub-themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Active	<p><i>"Be active in the school development, not just in his period of his class."</i>(Saleh, Int).</p> <p><i>"Teachers participate and contribute to school development in active ways not waiting to tell you" (Khalid, RE).</i></p>	6
Friendly and kind	<p><i>"Friendly and kind with the student to success by having good communication."</i> (Thamer, FG).</p> <p><i>"The first thing is the personality of the teacher, when the student see the teacher is how to deal with them as a friend" (Raed, Int.)</i></p> <p><i>"Act kindly and friendly with students in the classroom and outside."</i> (Raed, FG)</p>	7
Patient	<p><i>"Deal with patience in all school setting with students and colleague."</i> (Kamal, RE)</p> <p><i>"Just think I try to ignore some cases where some difficulties from the society, from the subjects, or some students. I try to work hard with patience as effectively" (Raed, Int.)</i></p>	8

One of the elements that constitutes personal skills for teacher leaders, as reported by seven teachers in the findings is being "active" in school development beyond the classroom. For example, Saleh in his interview, perceived himself as being a teacher leader by being active in the school, not only inside his classrooms with his students, while Khalid's reflective essay saw teachers as

essentially proactive and participatory, able to “*contribute to school development*”.

Kamal in his reflective essays mentioned that:

*“To be able to be effective in my school, I participated in different school activities like evening activities, social activities, development activities. This shows me active to my colleagues and headteachers as a way of teacher leadership”*

These views clearly connect with the roles of community builder and mentor mentioned above, as part of teachers’ general professional practices.

As well as energetically involving themselves in their work, the data also revealed that “kindness and friendliness” were significant elements of teacher leadership, mentioned by seven participants. The capacity to relate well with students, being able to proactively motivate them and being able to understand them were valued perceptions of teacher leaders, as was having “good communication” skills (Thamer, FG). Four teachers stated that a teacher leader can communicate positively in students’ achievements, as a real educator who guides them. The emphasis on having a friendly personality and how that relates to instruction and students’ learning was apparent in Thamer’s extract from his focus group, in which he described himself as being a teacher leader through being “friendly and kind” with the students, while Raed in his interview aspired to interact with students “as a friend”. Raed similarly said in his focus group that teacher leaders are friendly and kind, both in the classroom and in the world outside it.

Another personal skill that was indicated by almost all respondents’ transcripts (eight) related to the “patience” that teachers should have in order to be effective as teacher leaders. Participants demonstrated that they often offer support or act on behalf of their students and colleagues. Patience is thus not only an aspect of interaction with other members of the community, but also in dealing with the

school structure or hierarchy. Kamal recommended patience in one's dealings with students and staff in his reflective essay, while Raed in his interview linked patience to a calm approach to "difficulties" in order to continue being an effective teacher. He retrieved his experience as being patience by ignoring those incidents and concentrate on his actual teaching practices.

It is notable that so many of the participants mentioned these related personal skills, which show the importance of social and human capital for the teacher leader; certainly the stress laid on human relationships within the school differs from the model of the passive curriculum delivery that several of the teachers feel their job to demand. The personal skills of teacher leaders help them to act professionally and to be social in their relationships in their schools. The section below will discuss the professional and social skills that appeared in the reported data and characterize how the participants view themselves as teacher leaders.

### **5.3.2 Professional and social skills**

Among the major themes revealed through the coding of participant responses are the professional and social aspects of teaching – teachers possessing the skills to facilitate learning, support their community, and develop themselves professionally. Each of these skill groups forms a sub-theme in Table 10, below, with selected quotations from participants.

Table 10: Professional and Social skills

Sub-themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Facilitate learning	<p><i>"To facilitate the learning you of the students in the class."</i> (Khalid, FG)</p> <p><i>"Has to take some of coaching for that the students all of a way, or ways to use."</i> (Saleh, Int)</p>	7
Supportive of the community	<p><i>"Building skills and confidence in others; Building support with parents and community; Providing support and encouragement for other teacher."</i> (Ali, RE).</p> <p><i>"The teacher leader works in communication with members in the school enthusiastically with high spirit to achieve."</i> (Nasser, Int.)</p>	4
Professional development	<p><i>"Teacher leader need to go beyond their classroom or to help professionally the other teachers so they have maximum training skills."</i> (Thamer, FG)</p> <p><i>"The teacher, you may providing help for them, Teachers, then, will be able to develop skills and abilities for colleagues."</i> (Kamal, Int)</p>	5

The teachers identified how their teacher leadership skills are important in shaping their professional capital to think deeply about their teaching and learning. As an example of their professional skills, all nine respondents perceived that teachers could support their students by ‘facilitating their learning’, based on their own experience. Khalid prioritised support for the learning *"of the students in the class"* (FG). This capacity exceeds the in-classroom skills discussed above, since it also includes what Saleh in his interview called “coaching” – that is, motivating and guiding students within and beyond the classroom. Six of the participants identified

coaching as among their necessary skills. The above professional skills relate to facilitating students' learning and training them to be dependent on themselves.

Notably, it was also mentioned in several responses that teacher leaders have the characteristic of being a good co-worker or good professional supporter. The key skills involved are communication and positive attitude – what Nasser in his interview called a “high spirit to achieve”. Teacher leaders may thereby build up and support their school community, both in terms of the community and the “skills and confidence” of its members, as Ali mentioned in his reflective essay. As a prerequisite to the leadership required in order to successfully offer substantive support to the community, Khalid emphasises that an expert understanding of pedagogy, the culture of the students and society are required to

*“build you as a leader from in front of our students to know about culture of the teaching, culture of the students themselves, community of the society. Okay, so this is one of the aspects that we need to be a leader.”*

Use of the word ‘build’ may also point to how this leadership role is co-constructed, with the teacher negotiating their role vis-à-vis these areas in response to the dynamic and emergent needs of all stakeholders involved. In doing so, the teacher is also likely to draw on the cluster of person qualities and social capital mentioned in the previous section. This construction of leadership is thus likely to be an on-going process which can be enriched by experience and professional development, in addition to the teacher being a professional developer themselves.

Consequently, another important aspect of supporting the community relates to the support given to colleagues to further their professional development. It is widely accepted in TESOL that teacher leaders must engage in the professional development of themselves and others through training and self-reflection. The

responses, as exemplified by the quotation from Thamer in the focus group, link this to the ability to absorb and provide training to “help professionally other teachers”. Five teachers reported in their responses that teacher leaders should have some skills that enable them to “*develop skills and abilities for colleagues*” (Kamal, Int). This active view of mutual professional development will be returned to in the presentation of teachers training needs in section 5.4.3. Communication and positive relationship management were seen as key factors which empower teachers as professional developers and, consequently, other teachers as being engaged in professional development. Ali in his reflective essays spoke about his experience by saying:

*I use my communication skills to build a professional rapport with my colleagues. This skill is necessary not only developing them but also socialising with them to be close in our profession. As an example, I initiate talk in our meeting room in breaks just to show this to my colleagues”.*

Ali’s quote stressed the talk of teachers and its impact on developing their communication skills with colleagues and how this gives return to their teaching. The personal and professional skills of teacher leadership can guide them to act in their profession; however, the perceived capacity of teacher leaders to make good decisions based on their professional and personal judgment represents another significant area of skills of teacher leaders emerging from the data.

### **5.3.3 Decisional skills**

It is undeniable that even in the most restricted of settings; teachers are likely to be involved in a process of constant decision-making in their daily practice. This is shown in the previous quotes in section 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 as teachers used their professional agency to cope with the difficulties they encountered inside and beyond their classrooms. When leadership roles are undertaken, this is likely to be amplified further. It is therefore unsurprising that the decisional skills appeared in

the responses of seven out of nine participants. These skills are related to the administrative proficiencies of teachers in their teaching and learning processes, which can be grouped under the sub-themes in Table 11 of Managing, Controlling and Adapting.

Table 11: Decisional Skills

Sub-themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Managing	<p><i>"need specific skills to taking initiative; Managing the work."</i> (Tariq, RE)</p> <p><i>"teachers leaders need certain skills that enable them to succeed in confronting obstacles."</i> (Ali, FG)</p>	7
Controlling	<p><i>"Is controller, needs skills for controlling the students controlling everything."</i> (Khalid, Int)</p>	8
Adapting	<p><i>"Teacher leaders are coping with difficulties and have ways to overcome them."</i> (Saleh, Int)</p> <p><i>" I deal with colleagues with their problem. we can share information with each other, yeah, we live in one school and share education. For example we meet to solve problems and putt strategies" (Ziad, RE)</i></p>	6

Participants reported in seven instances that teacher leaders should have skills that make them able to overcome difficulties and consider plans to solve problems and deal with their professional situations. Tariq notes that these are "specific skills" in his reflective essay, to do with organisation, planning and "taking initiative". In short, they must become "managers" of their professional practice. Ali, in his focus group, provided very similar comments to Tariq, noting how teacher leaders need certain skills that enable them to succeed in "confronting obstacles" to solve problems. Similarly, Saleh reported that teacher leaders need

to be good at “coping with difficulties inside classroom and have ways to overcome them.”

Teacher leaders also have some skills that underpin their involvement and responsibility within their classes. Some of these responsibilities include having positive leadership qualities and strong competencies in classroom management and student discipline. Khalid in his interview mentioned the importance of “*skills for controlling the students*”, which would include discipline, interpersonal skills and organisation. Particularly striking is the recurrent use of the concept of “control” among eight of the nine participants. The following excerpt shows how the term is pervasive in the discourse of teacher leadership:

*“The teacher leader is controller...controlling the students controlling everything, like... you know someone give you for example the work materials and you just applied. you have just follow know. You need to have skills of controlling everything. You have your point of views and you apply your methods as you like.”*  
(Khalid, Int)

The absence of colleagues and sharing roles from this depiction of control and controller is perhaps indicative of how individuals may take charge in the absence of formally acknowledged teacher leadership roles. Despite the potentially positive impact this practitioner may make, it will be argued that further collegiality is required and that working in silos should be avoided. This sense of individual control is also apparent in Thamer’s view of teacher leadership roles:

*“This issue needs encouragement and enthusiasm, but the fact is that the teacher himself is the master of the situation in selecting teaching methodology and activities that enhances and goals.”*

This on the one hand highlights the autonomous capacities of teachers; on the other hand, it draws attention to the need for a discourse of shared teacher leadership and development in this area, as will be discussed further in Chapter 6.



A common feature of teaching, increased by the responsibilities of leadership, is that it requires professional practitioners to be adaptable, and able to cope with different people and unexpected situations. As Saleh said in his interview, the role includes “coping with difficulties” and possessing the skills and strategies to respond to them successfully. This means not only individual adaptability, but also being able to pool resources and co-operate with colleagues, which will have implications for strengthening and sharing control. Ziad in his reflective essay recalled how he and his fellow teachers “*meet to solve problems*” and develop strategies. This example of informal collaboration could demonstrate the professional capital teachers possess that would enable them to adapt to the implementation of a more formally acknowledged decision-making process that facilitates their leadership.

In the above findings and that relate to the first three questions with their lived experiences, participants have shown awareness about teacher leadership as a concept and the desired roles that relate to it. They also shown an eagerness to perceive themselves as teacher leaders and described this by pointing out different professional capitals that they see as necessary for teacher leaders. These necessary skills naturally also need the opportunity to flourish, and several factors might support or block teacher’s ability to take up or perform well in leadership roles. The section below therefore discusses the factors that the participants viewed as enabling or disempowering them in utilizing their human and decisional capital as teacher leaders in their schools.

## **5.4 Factors enabling or disempowering teacher leadership practices**

Teachers were asked to identify empowering factors or challenges to teacher leadership in their answers to Research Question 4: What factors enable or disempower Saudi English-language teachers in KSA to be teacher leaders? An individual's professional practice can naturally only flourish in an appropriate setting, meaning that understanding the factors that promote or inhibit teachers' leadership activities – and in particular how these are seen from the teachers' perspectives – will be a valuable contribution to reforming the current system.

The findings illustrate a general consensus that teachers face challenges in building their capacity for teacher leadership. In all three data sets the participants enumerated multiple factors that prevent them from being teacher leaders, and were much keener to discuss these than those that empower them, most likely due to the lack of current leadership opportunities, as shown in Chapter 2 and Section 5.2. Pre-empting the specific research question focusing on the constraints, participants had already offered suggestions relating to these in reference to earlier questions, thereby indicating the prominence of this issue. The themes defined in this section capture the several types of barriers to teacher leadership practices: roles recognition and clarity, guidance and support, pre- and in- service training and professional development, teachers' influence and empowerment, and school culture.

### **5.4.1 Role recognition and clarity**

The professional capital of teachers needs to be recognised and incorporated into the various opportunities for teacher leadership roles, as reported under research question two. Teachers had also stated in research question three that they

viewed themselves as teacher leaders in that they recognized the professional capital they had which would allow them to act as teacher leaders. However, the predominant perspective was that there is a lack of recognition and clarity for such roles from the MoE and the school community about teacher leadership. Participants were able to identify the kinds of the support they need to empower them as teacher leaders, and noted the current absence of such support. These major concerns can be grouped as follows: a lack of available teacher leadership roles and the absence of clear job descriptions, as seen in the sub-themes in Table 12.

Table 12: Role recognition and clarity

Sub-themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Absence of teacher leadership roles	<p><i>"The Ministry does not give us a role to be a teacher leader."</i> (Khalid, Int)</p> <p><i>"I am seeking for these roles. But sometimes my ministry does not help me and give me the roles to be leader in my subject in my school area.. but I am trying"</i> (Saleh, FG)</p>	8
Absence of clear job descriptions	<p><i>"There is no any job description for teacher leaders."</i> (Nasser, FG).</p> <p>"No, no. our original job as teachers, we do not have description for the roles in our teaching. Also we do not have roles and description of teacher leaders at all" (Raed, RE).</p>	9

One of the kinds of the support needed is for teacher leaders' roles to be made available, both formally and informally. The participants almost unanimously (eight) indicated that there are no official roles for teachers to act as teacher leaders, such as Khalid's complaint quoted above. They would like the MoE to set

up the roles to engage them and empower them to practice their agency in school development roles inside and beyond their schools. Saleh exemplified this desire in his focus group, describing his search for such jobs, and frustration at their absence. He nonetheless draws on the essential qualities of being active and patient, showing perseverance in his quest for such roles. This also explicitly shown in Ziad's quote as he narrated an experience where he needs to find the policy of teacher leadership. He said:

*“One day, I was in a conflict with my headteacher. He asked me to do some work for my colleagues as extra job. He wanted me to do peer observation to them. I am good to do this but this might be strange for my colleagues as no one did it before me. I asked him if there is one of our roles. He said I do not know. We have not received documents from the MoE of your roles as leaders”.*

Thus, the absence of policies regarding the roles of teachers does not only affect the teacher leader, but also affects the colleagues and the school where a lack of recognition will be prevailing.

The data also revealed that there is a lack of definition of teacher leaders' roles, as indicated by Nasser in FG by saying there are no adequate job descriptions. This leaves teachers and the community members inside the school confused about teachers' roles, and what they should do in addition to teaching the prescribed curricula. Kamal in his interview reaffirms the importance of giving them "clear responsibility". Raed goes so far as to claim there are no workable descriptions at all for teacher leaders' roles, and “we do not have roles and description of teacher leaders at all” (RE). All nine participants spoke of a lack of definition for teacher leadership roles, showing how common and important this problem is.

#### **5.4.2 Support and guidance**

Among the forms of assistance teachers ask for – here gathered under the themes of support and guidance – are ways to build trust and confidence as teacher

leaders in their schools. Such trust would make teachers more likely to accept the roles and enhance their professional capital. In Table 13 the various sub-themes identified in participants' responses are shown in terms of the problems or shortcomings they perceive, including lack of respect, lack of job security, and lack of promotions and rewards.

Table 13: Guidance and Support

Sub-Theme	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Lack of respect	<p><i>"This time we did not have respect. Because the ministry gave the students more power than teachers. They did not give you power the ministry."</i> (Ali, Int)</p> <p><i>"We need to facilitate the understanding of the society to have respect on us as teachers, we listen to insulting words in schools outside the media."</i> (Thamer, Int.)</p>	6
Lack of Job Security	<p><i>"The teacher does not work in his city may be he is working far away from his family, he lives alone. So he is feeling boring. He is every week travel and back, I think this is most important thing making disable."</i> (Raed, Int).</p> <p><i>"I am trying you know when you come to a new school, although it is not in my area and this let us face a problem. Difficulties."</i> (Ali, FG)</p>	7
Lack of promotions and rewards	<p><i>"We do not have promotions. This leaves teachers unmotivated to teach, let alone to be teacher leaders."</i> (Ali, FG)</p> <p><i>"Lazy and effective teachers are the same, the ministry must give a bonus for the teacher makes success or achievement with the student."</i> (Saleh, RE)</p> <p><i>"Increase salary specially those who will work as teacher leaders."</i> (Kamal, FG)</p> <p><i>"The teacher must be honored and enhanced by encouragement that help him professionally and let him participate in school development and in the teaching process."</i> (Ziad, RE)</p> <p><i>"Because the ministry does not give us motivation like when your success, the ministry should give us bonus and reward."</i> (Thamer, Int)</p>	8

A striking testimonial on the “lack of respect” perceived by participants is provided in the one-to-one interviews, in which Ali reported that on the need for respect to act as a teacher leader. Indeed, six out of nine participants identified disrespect, claiming that the MoE gave respect to students over them, resulting in a feeling of being unsupported. Thamer reported that teachers were insulted in the media, and that teachers needed to “facilitate the understanding of the society” (Int) if their profession is to be treated as having value and professional standing. In relation to this view, Khalid in the FG said: “There is saying: “new teachers are written by pencils”; they do not believe in us as teachers.” This overall disrespect also appeared in the media as reported by Khalid in his interview:

*“Every day you find on the news unrespect of teachers. Teachers do not work professionally, teachers are lazy, they just make negative pictures of us. This really affects us”.*

The news even if they describe real situations that happened in the daily life of schools, however, teachers find this as a way of showing unrespect to their profession.

Beyond unhappiness with their standing in society, there were also concerns about the security and dignity of the job of teachers, brought up by all nine participants. The perceived lack of job security impacted negatively on their performance and their motivation to maximise their professionalism. Eight teachers, among them Raed, indicated that they are assigned by the Ministry to places for their school jobs where they are far from their families. Raed "does not work in his city" and is "far away from his family". This situation causes teachers to face difficulties of instability.

Ali in the FG similarly reported that he was appointed to a new school without being consulted, and this "let us face a problem. Difficulties". Chapter 2 has described how teachers can be required to change jobs at the behest of the ministry (not just in the initial appointment). The fact that the Ministry contributes to the job instability of teachers in a geographical sense reflects detrimentally upon the individual's emotional and professional wellbeing. Regrettably, this may reduce professional energy and enthusiasm, further diminishing capacity for effective teacher leadership, or sense of being valued as a human being in a teacher's role.

Another constraint that teachers point to is lack of promotion and rewards. It was almost unanimous among participants that the lack of promotion and rewards in education is a significant disempowerment factor. Ali in FG exemplifies this, saying: *"This leaves teachers unmotivated to teach, let alone to be teacher leaders."* This can also be seen from the statement by Thamer in his interview, who mentioned that *"the ministry should give us bonus and rewards" to "give us motivation like when your success."*

Teachers also stated that there is no differentiation in terms of promotions and rewards between the good teachers and others. Saleh wearily notes: "Lazy and effective teachers are the same." Participants in a number of responses stated that one incentive would be to increase the salary for those who participate in leadership positions and roles. Several participants, such as Kamal, indicated that there is no additional pay for those who work in leadership positions, such as headteachers and their assistants, a policy he would like to see change. In addition to financial rewards, teachers need to be encouraged to take the lead in educational processes through multiple incentives and professional awards, as indicated by Ziad in his reflective essay.

A willingness to engage in this goal is an important precursor which will certainly facilitate the area discussed in the following section: achieving professional potential through training and development.

### 5.4.3 Training and professional development

A number of responses from the participants relate to teachers' training and professional development, which concerns formal and informal interventions to improve specific skills, both pedagogical and organisational, which may be part of university teacher training or courses for active teachers. There was a general view that training and development was needed and lacking if teachers are to take on leadership roles, with these needs split into the sub-themes of pre-service and in-service, as shown in Table 14.

Table 14: Training and Professional Development

Sub-Theme	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Insufficient pre-service education	<p><i>"The university did not give us topics about teacher leadership."</i> (Ziad, Int)</p> <p><i>"I think teacher leadership is one of the theories and I think this will help to teach English and be leader. We studied in universities only how to teach English only, and theories of learning but not to be leaders."</i> (Saleh, FG)</p>	8
Inadequacy of in-service education	<p><i>"In-service training is only as mainly lectures, but not those of teacher leadership. Training is imposed on us. You have no roles and trainers themselves trying just gathering us and lecturing on us, they are not specialist, so it is imposed."</i> (Thamer, FG).</p> <p><i>"You wait for them to tailor these for you for them, no way to listen to you. Just something we should take into measure, they tell us to read it."</i> (Nasser, FG)</p> <p><i>"Teacher training us need special training not give the trainer as me, teacher as me."</i> (Raed, Int)</p>	7



Eight of the participants agreed that the pre-service training in their university study did not prepare them to be teacher leaders. This can be noticed in the examples of Ziad in his interview and Saleh from FG. Saleh succinctly encapsulates the recurrent theme of top-down interventions, stating that they only received what he described as “imposing theories”. He goes on to specify that they were taught “only how to teach English” but not how to be teacher leaders.

This indicates that teachers recognize the importance of teacher education programmes in their universities, and how specific teacher “topics about teacher leadership” (Ziad, Int) could help them construct their knowledge, as they are aware that they did not study teacher leadership theories or the principles of how to become a teacher leader.

Not only did the pre-service education described by the participants not prepare them to be teacher leaders, the courses and programmes of the in-service training did not acknowledge and provide them with teacher leadership theories and perspectives. One of the fundamental issues is that training is uniformly given to all teachers and imposed upon them. As described in Chapter 2, in-service training in its formal mode consists largely of lectures on specific topics given by external trainers. This was felt by many (7) participants to be unsatisfactory, with training viewed as homogenous, not engaging, one-way, inexperienced and overly standardised. This is highlighted by Thamer in his focus group, who mentioned that teachers have “no roles” in designing their own specific training needs. Moreover, the trainers are not specialists, and only give lectures to teachers without being actively engaged in the training, or informed and experienced in English teaching or teacher leadership specifically. The content and delivery of the training courses are professional development according to an established structure. The teachers

expressed a lack of motivation and frustration about attending them. Nasser in FG, matching perspectives of other participants, reported that their teacher education programs are imposed on them.

In the reflective essays, Thamer for example mentioned that in-service training courses were described as not meeting their needs and satisfaction, and failing to cover topics or content which build and develop their potential as teacher leaders. The reflective essays were more detailed and personal than the focus groups; for example, Ali disappointedly reported in his reflective essay that the training programs in the educational directorate fail to

*“satisfy the professional needs of the teacher via training courses that develop skills and abilities to be teacher leader.”*

Khalid also reported his experiences as being chosen to introduce a training session to his colleagues:

“One day, I was appointed by my supervisor to present a lesson training to my colleagues in my school and five others coming from the near schools. I know that I am qualified but how comes to do this in front of the same of my colleagues”.

Triangulated data seemed to verify this statement as a fairly representative view among the sample of respondents.

Teacher participants viewed the individuals who deliver the in-house training as having insufficient experience themselves to provide teacher leadership training (Raed, Int.) in addition to the barriers created by the lack of training courses for teacher leaders and the lack of professional designers and trainers in the schools or the educational directorates. Surprisingly, Raed believed that most of the training was delivered by other teachers rather than specialists, since in their previous professional lives trainers were mostly teachers like themselves. This was deemed a negative factor, since a distinction is drawn between subject (teacher) knowledge and facilitator (trainer) skills, repeating the wide range of

skills that participants recognised are needed for effective teachers and leaders, as seen under research questions 1 and 3.

On the whole, teachers speak in this study of their frustration that what little training is available pays scant heed to their needs as teachers and individuals; they have no say in how the training is developed or delivered. As is reported in the next section, the importance of teachers' voices and their professional empowerment being heard in these and other related matters needs to be recognised.

#### **5.4.4 Teachers' Influence and Empowerment**

Teachers in all three data sets pointed to how their voices are not being heard by their school leaders or the Ministry of Education. They are seen as having no influence, being passive recipients of orders, and as lacking the empowerment to fulfil leadership roles. Teachers described how the policy and system of education do not support them in their professional freedom and give them limited space to act beyond their classrooms. The lack of policies addressing teacher leadership roles and development are placing teachers in a situation where they wait passively to be led by others as well as being neglected in the context of developmental changes. There is feeling among the participants that they have been not listened to and that they have been neglected from being engaged; their voice and opinions as professionals are mostly treated as of little importance in the various educational processes, as shown in the data evidence in Table 15, under the sub-themes of the lack of teachers' voice and imposed orders.

Table 15: Teacher's Influence and Empowerment

Sub-Theme	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Lack of teachers' Voice	<p><i>"We have rules, we have red line, we cannot do anything may be when that student wants help from me outside the class, I cannot because I do not have any voice to change."</i> (Saleh, Int)</p> <p><i>"They did not ask you at all. My opinion in our boxes and they are not ask us about ways, about how to teach, about something if you have a note, they do not care about that."</i> (Nasser, FG)</p> <p><i>"We have no say, they say do not cross the lines and the boundaries."</i> (Khalid, RE).</p>	8
Imposed orders	<p><i>"We received order from the manager, from supervisor, to do that thing actually we have curriculum and we must finish it. We cannot do anything from me. Actually, I cannot do more than things". They impose on us and give us orders, Do these things, do not do that thing. Just we received order."</i> (Khalid, RE).</p> <p><i>"Development in all aspects is vertical. Although teachers participate and contribute so much but the ministry has the final word. The ministry plans disciplines and all its activities and even co-activities. I think the teachers' role needs more trust."</i> (Nasser, Int.)</p> <p><i>"Most of the times they try to control our methods by saying do this and do this, this is wrong, this right. We lose our voice by this."</i> (Thamer, Int.)</p>	7

Saleh in his interview refers to the “red line” for teachers, beyond which they have no voice, meaning official or unofficial representations of their views and requirements among those in authority to make decisions. These red lines come from the structure of the ‘top-down system’— now a veritable leitmotiv in the narrative – in which teachers’ roles are tightly restricted to the classroom,

preventing them from supporting their students or community beyond these confines. This voiceless climate for teachers, noted by 8 of the participants, is also indicated by Nasser from the FG, referring to the “boxes” to which teachers are confined. This leaves them powerless to practise their agency and professional authority. Teachers perceived a boundary between themselves and their school leaders and supervisors, with their opinions not expected to be heard outside of their boxes. This prevents and discourages them from taking on leadership roles. This is also stated by Khalid in his reflective essay, claiming *“We have no say, they say do not cross the lines and the boundaries.”*

The situation is one in which headteachers and supervisors give orders to teachers to follow and teachers are only doing what they have been told, staying within the “red lines” of an imposed hierarchy. As Khalid in his RE continued: *“They impose on us and give us orders.”* The hierarchical model is reinforced by Nasser’s interview, in which he says *“Development in all aspects is vertical”*, meaning that teachers are largely ignored, expected to obey the decisions of the Ministry, and are not granted adequate trust and autonomy in their roles.

This top-down culture is not unique as the system and policy is centralized in the Saudi education context; the frequency with which terms like ‘order/orders’, and ‘impose’ are used in respect to the system is revealing of this centralization. Seven of the participants mentioned imposed orders as a disempowering factor. The participants generally suggested that policies should be designed from the bottom-up. This would help teacher to have their voices heard on all aspects of their teaching and learning procedures. As an example, Ali in his reflective essay indicated that:

*“Teachers are frustrated as have no say in the evaluation policy, training, choosing curriculum and all the things that relate to our teaching.”*

One of the teachers in FG, Ziad, confirmed the absence of voice, especially in curriculum design and development:

*“We do not have roles or voice in curriculum design. But I think we should participate with them in such roles to discuss some advantages and disadvantages of the curriculum.”*

Beyond their own frustration at being ignored, teachers stressed the importance of their voice being heard by the Ministry of Education. They felt the MoE should deal with teachers as “partners” with a valuable contribution to make, as indicated by Thamer in his interview:

*“Teachers needs to have their voice heard, beliefs, opinions, voices make it real partner. Real person. Partner. Listen to them when I do curriculum building and policies and exams, changes anything, rights, teacher’s rights everything.”*

Although in principle supervisors are tasked with helping teachers, they are generally reported as practising criticism rather than giving instruction and guidance. This is indicated from the response of Thamer in his one to one interview; he recounts his experience with his supervisors and them simply wanting to "control our methods by saying do this and do this."

This also establishes a situation for teachers where they lack cooperation and communication, as such an organisational structure does not support teacher empowerment. Thus, teachers have no autonomy and voice to practice their leadership and teaching, as they are restricted and controlled by the top-down policies and imposed orders, being passive in all the decision-making processes. The teachers made it clear that they have no influence with the Ministry of Education, as Nasser in his interview complains:

*“they do not listen to us. We always being passive. You know passive? Yes, by the ministry being passive not listen to, this affect us of course to be leaders.”*

They see everything as imposed on them, including drastic changes in job roles or the curriculum, as described by Raed in his reflective essay; they live in a situation where:

*“Suddenly you have something, oh my God; it is the ministry all the years like this. Suddenly you have one-year-old, a new system, oh my God, you have to sign, why they do not listen to us.”*

Similar effects can be seen in the shortcomings felt by the teachers about the school culture within which they work, as discussed below.

#### **5.4.5 School Culture**

School culture is used to refer to the various beliefs, perceptions, relationships and norms that shape and influence how a school functions; this may include teaching practices, leadership styles, core values, community engagement and professional organisation. Many of the disempowering factors of teacher leadership, as perceived by the participants, were associated with the culture and atmosphere that exists within their school community and beyond. This culture influences the extent to which the EFL teachers feel they can practice professional teacher leadership. The participants indicated in a number of responses that they faced difficulties that relate to the school culture. The disempowering factors are interconnected with the areas discussed under the earlier research questions, and are likely to fuel a negative atmosphere in the school culture in which they offer their professional practice. In Table 16 the sub-themes relating to school culture that participants wanted to discuss, mostly in terms of how these require improvement, are shown.

Table 16: School Culture

Sub-Theme	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Hierarchical structure	<p><i>"The school structure does affect teacher leadership where we see ourselves as followers."</i> (Ali, FG).</p> <p>"the school lose cooperation if the structure dictators and teachers followers. I mean this might affect teacher leader" (Saleh, Int.)</p>	8
Lack of Communication and collaboration	<p><i>"There is a gap between other subject teachers. So there is a gap between subject teachers. There is a lack of communication between the same subject."</i> (Tariq, RE)</p> <p><i>"The lack of relationship between school community and social community to share the experiences."</i> (Raed, Int.)</p>	7
Criticism and insults	<p><i>"Insulting from the society and school community from students where some difficulties from the society, from the subjects, or some students. I try to work hard as effectively."</i> (Raed, RE).</p> <p><i>"The school culture is contested. You do not feel supported because insults you hear from students, from supervisor from headteacher"</i> (Ali, Int.).</p>	7
Overload of work	<p><i>"Because of overloads of periods and other activities, we do not have time, because of more periods we do not have time to act as leaders."</i> (Ali, RE).</p> <p><i>"We have no time especially in this. Finish your classes and then move, Run away. You know, you know before I met you. I was about to run away."</i> (Thamer, Int)</p> <p><i>"First thing is so many classes, lectures. So that means there is no time for you to lead, share colleagues, help student or look for the school headteacher."</i> (Raed, Int)</p>	7



One of the prevailing sub-themes expressed by multiple teachers (8) is that a school culture built on a rigid 'hierarchical structure' disempowers staff and raises difficulties for the EFL teachers, by only allowing them to be "followers", as reported by Ali in his interview. Teachers receive orders and their responses are passive. This affects their participation as teacher leaders by disabling them from practising their agency and maximising their potential. Saleh warns in his interview that if the structure is dictatorial, the school will "lose cooperation" of teachers, and exclude them from leadership activities. This phenomenon can be clearly seen throughout the findings, to contribute to disengagement among teachers. One of the examples offered by participant about this appeared in Khalid's quote:

*"You know, even our students we cannot solve our problems with them unless we take the permission from the headteachers or his deputy or the counsellor. We are followers of doctrine orders as followers even in the basic of our teaching".*

Lack of communication and collaboration is also problematic for teachers wishing to take on leadership roles. Tariq in his reflective essay saw "a gap between subject teachers", which causes a "lack of communication between teachers of the same subject". This obstructs teacher leadership as it does not promote a positive school culture. The majority of participants (seven) also identified a lack of communication in the culture of the school and its wider community. This is indicated in the response of Raed in his interview, where he stated a similar belief regarding how a culture where teachers work in isolation and lack communities of practice can be disempowering for teacher leadership (see also 5.3.3 – a culture of control is connected to working in silos). Ali elaborated on this from his experience by saying:

*"I tried my best to be a model in collaboration but teachers do not have time to collaborate beyond their classes every one of us at least have 20 periods to teach weekly, my school has no collaboration as I hope".*

A negative school culture may make teachers feel undervalued and even insulted in their work. Although much of the preceding discussion relates to how teachers desire feedback about their work and training to improve it, it seems that much of the critique they receive is perceived as mere criticism, including the assessment by supervisors, as discussed in Chapter 2. This is evidenced in Ziad's reflective essay who mentioned that:

*During the visit of his supervisor to my class, I finished my lesson in 30 minutes. Then my supervisor took the lead and complete the lesson. He repeated the same lesson in different way to my students. After that, he went to the headteacher's office and wrote his report. You know, he wrote negative points in the supervision notebook where every teacher and supervisor can see. This is not good"*

This criticism as viewed by the participants affects their professional agency as teacher leaders and their supervisors' professional relationship with them

Raed felt this negative pressure also from the general community as well as individual students, as stated in his reflective essay. Generally, participants held that they were not being granted the professional standing that their role deserves. Ali, for example, stressed in his interview that he was affected by insults from *"from students, from supervisor from headteacher."*

Teachers also recognised the obstacles associated with an overload of work and a lack of sufficient time to collaborate and act as teacher leaders. Ali indicated that they do not have time to act as teacher leaders, even for themselves and their CPD, let alone for their colleagues, students and school community. This means that time does not suffice to help teachers to concentrate on their actual professional performance in teaching their classes. Seven participants indicated that they do not have time within the given school day to accomplish leadership roles, as they have fixed and structured schedules during the whole school day. Having adequate time to work beyond the carrying out of teaching can be one of

the means of supporting teacher leadership. The time constraints leave teachers in a situation where they want to leave the school once they have finished their classes. This experience was voiced in Thamer' response in the interview; there is a culture of teachers wanting to “just teach and go.”

Adding to this, large class sizes and heavy timetables were regarded by teachers as de-motivators to participation in teacher leadership, whether in formal or informal roles. Because of the overloaded schedules they are allocated, time to go beyond their classes and help the school community or act as teacher leaders is limited.

Despite these several and significant obstacles to teachers maximising their professional capital and establishing effective communities of practice through teacher leadership, the data indicated that those teachers who viewed themselves as legitimate leaders wanted to take on different opportunities to participate in teacher leadership activities and the general school development plans – if they were provided with them.

## **5.5 Teachers' desires to act as teacher leaders**

The fifth and final question of the current research was: ‘To what extent do Saudi English-language teachers want to take on teacher leadership roles?’ Having laid out how participants viewed such roles, their requirements and challenges, are they still encouraged to take them on, and to see the benefits they provide?

Coding of participants' responses reiteratively showed their eagerness to be involved in school developmental plans and strategic actions, especially those which may affect teachers' work, their classroom and teaching issues. Although the findings in research question four showed that participants experienced many

disempowering factors, all teachers identified themselves as leaders and had the desire to act as teacher leaders inside and beyond their classrooms. As an example, Nasser in his one to one interview stated that he is willing to act as a teacher leader and extend his professional practice beyond his classroom: “Sure I want myself to take on these roles with colleagues, with society, with school, I mean more than teaching.” Khalid (FG) shared this view and stated he wanted to serve his colleagues and the school community: “Any person wants to be leader, the best, always I want to be the best, for my work, for my school society.”

The participants generally had a desire and willingness to be teacher leaders by being active in the roles of teacher leadership. The responses to research question two about the perceived roles for themselves showed that teachers are aware of themselves as teacher leaders, and this was also indicated in responses to research question three. Again, although the responses to research question four reported many obstacles to the practices of teacher leadership in their schools, they still showed their desire to be teacher leaders. Teachers expressed clearly that they would like to be recognised as professionals who possess professional capital that enables them to be involved and participate in the various activities within and outside their school communities.

In their response to research question 5, teachers identified the key benefits why they would like to take on teacher leadership roles, if or when they were supported and empowered to do so. For the most part their willingness was connected to the benefits of teacher leaders, to themselves and others. If conditions are met within the parameters of what they see as motivators, participants identified teacher leadership benefits relating to several areas, as shown in Figure 6.

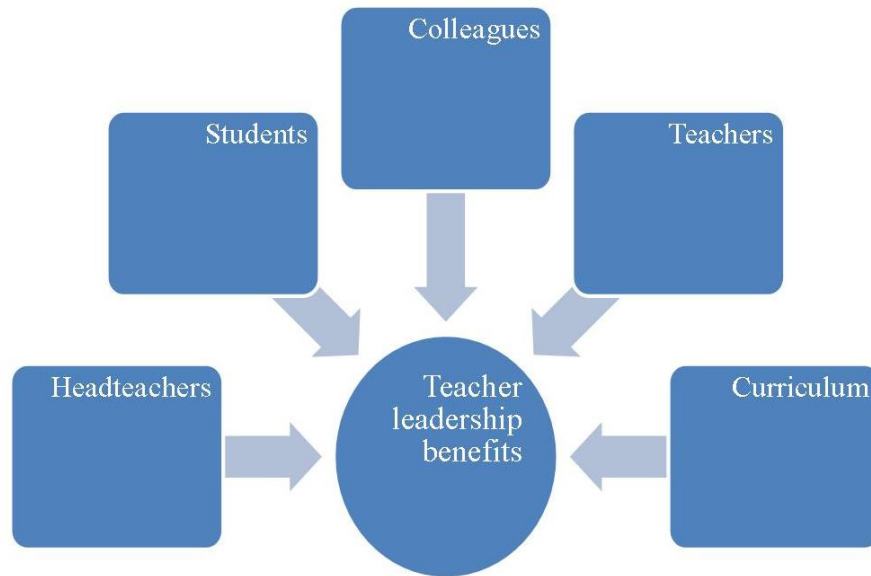


Figure 6: Teacher Leader Benefits

The diverse ways in which the participants saw teacher leadership as beneficial can be usefully divided according to the area of impact. Although the impacts of increased professional autonomy and agency through teacher leadership on these areas overlap and can be mutually supporting, it is helpful to consider them under distinct themes, since this reflects the great variety of ways that the teachers perceived their potential for acting positively in their schools. When leadership capacity is fostered and teachers' professional capital is maximized, teachers want to reflect on how they view themselves as teacher leaders. They identify multiple benefits of teacher leadership practices. Teachers are aware of the impact of their professional practice on the wider areas of school development and stakeholders, starting from themselves, collegiality and collaboration with their colleagues, helping their headteachers, designing curricula and the learning of their students.

### 5.5.1 Teacher leadership benefits to themselves

One of the significant themes that appeared from the responses was that teacher leadership could help teachers to maximise their own potential and effectiveness in different areas. One of these areas is their professional development capacity. Participants believed that one of the main factors of teacher leadership is that it can enable them to access CPD, which in turn develops their teaching practices and professional growth. Table 17 shows the sub-themes identified, including Developing professional learning, Agency and empowerment, and Professional recognition.

Table 17: Teacher leadership benefits to themselves

Sub-Themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Developing Professional learning	<p><i>"We as teachers, then, will be able to develop skills and abilities. They will also employ modern methods."</i> (Raed, RE)</p> <p><i>"I think there is a gap between theory and practice. Teachers will develop and acquire many professional development skills and social skills as well"</i> (Nasser, FG)</p>	8
Agency and empowerment	<p><i>"I have the power to create new ideas to help my student. It's giving me self-confident. Ability to solve my class's problems whatever the problem with my students, equipment, curriculum and etc... I can also going to development case and be able to think deeply of How can I improve my students' levels. I can put my own strategies, exams and exercises."</i> (Khalid, Int)</p> <p><i>"being teacher leader let me have agency in develop everything to facilitate my job. This is important for teachers in their classroom and outside as well."</i> (Ali, FG).</p>	7
Professional Recognition	<p><i>"In future anything will have positive image this of teachers."</i> (Thamer, FG)</p> <p><i>"This is the recognition of teacher leadership by the society and how this will impact positively on the teachers and the school itself."</i> (Saleh,Int.)</p>	6

Teacher leadership as a way of teachers' professional empowerment helps teachers to "to develop skills and abilities" as expressed by Raed in his RE, which can be directly linked to CPD. It was widely seen (eight responses) that there are obvious benefits to improved teacher training and their CPD. Raziq, as an example, saw himself as under an obligation to seek continual professional improvement "to improve his level and teacher roles." The training must be well designed and relate directly to teacher's practice and individual needs, to prevent the "gap" identified by Nasser in FG as an impediment to successful development. If teachers are to escape the culture of acting merely as content deliverers, they must develop their skills and professional capital throughout their careers.

As a natural consequence of CPD, many participants (seven) also mentioned how leadership roles could enhance their practice, if they were empowered to act with real agency, both "*in their classroom and outside as well*", as Ali noted in FG. Additional time and space dedicated teacher leadership development was viewed as having considerable benefits in terms of empowerment to effect positive change in their practice and schools. Khalid gave a particularly detailed response in his interview, which included improved personal confidence and effectiveness in the classroom, but also the opportunity to "*think deeply*" about his practice and profession, with positive effects for students through his design of "*strategies, exams and exercises*." This kind as a professional reflection is another way of teachers' empowerment to develop their professional learning

This professional approach to self-assessment and improvement, which several teachers expressed a willingness to undertake, ought, however, be recognised by the wider community, and participants repeatedly mentioned that teachers will have more professional recognition and respect within and beyond the school

once they are empowered as teacher leaders. Being professional teacher leaders can help them achieve outstanding performance and gain the respect they deserve, as seven responses noted. Thamer expressed optimism that with the right changes to the current system, teachers could improve their image in society, with positive effects for teachers as professionals. Thamer envisaged a future in which teachers had a “*positive image*” (FG), while Saleh saw how this would “*impact positively on the teachers and the school itself*” in his interview.

Furthermore, through the same processes that increased their personal professional competence, participants identified that their empowerment as teacher leaders could maximize their professional capital to help their peers and colleagues. This will be presented in the next section.

#### **5.5.2 Teacher leadership benefits to colleagues**

The data revealed some contributions that teacher leadership could make towards assisting EFL co-workers and other colleagues within the school. The positive interchange between teacher leaders and their fellow teachers that teacher leaders can promote was perceived as impacting on their colleagues positively, particularly through sharing of experience. Table 18 shows the sub-themes under which the findings from the data have been grouped.



Table 18: Teacher leadership benefits to colleagues

Sub-Themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Providing professional development	<p><i>"I help my colleagues with their problem. We can share information with each other. For example we meet to solve problems and putt. So we are like health workers in hospitals specialist, technician and consultant. New teachers are listening to my advices because I am the expert teacher. Community supports the educational process. Eventually, teacher leadership is a great chance to be a real teacher."</i> (Kamal, RE)</p> <p><i>"The colleagues see me what I am doing to my student and maybe they will benefit from my experience. Then may be new teacher will see other teacher leaders do that things and then the new teacher may be influenced from all teachers who have experience."</i> (Saleh, Int)</p>	6
Collaboration	<p><i>"As effective teacher leaders do not work in isolation, they have to be part of a healthy community whilst working with others. This helps to ensure success in their engagement with colleagues in their roles both inside and outside their classrooms."</i> (Khalid, RE).</p> <p><i>"Better communication and relationships between teachers enhance integration and cooperation to help teachers achieve best results"</i> (Tariq, FG).</p>	5

Kamal in his reflective essay mentioned developing teachers' potential in their teaching and learning practices as a benefit to their colleagues, as well as building trust among them, encouraging them to listen to each other, and by example promoting leadership practice inside their schools. In several responses the

continual nature of the training and development was stressed, rather than a piecemeal or one-size-fits-all approach. Teachers learning directly from each other's' experience seems to be the model that most participants would prefer, both as trainers and trainees, such as Saleh in his interview saying "*colleagues see me what I am doing*".

Training and development were largely viewed as collective activities as much as individual. Five responses thus emphasised collegiality and communication, shared practice and specialisation, stressing that teaching is a social activity, rather than something performed in isolation. One interviewed teacher, Khalid, described in his reflective essay how he collaborates with his workplace peers and his "engagement with colleagues". This form of empowerment for teachers will make them professional models for both novice teachers and established colleagues in the school. This is also shown in the focus group as Ali proudly stated that:

*"I am thankful to my own abilities as effective teacher. My supervisor elected e to be a model for my colleagues in doing model lessons to them"*.

Participants may be seen as working collaboratively inside their local and school communities to share ideas and reflections on teaching and learning. This also means that they are not only teaching but also contributing to collegial partnership, which aids the dissemination of knowledge and skills, and enhances their own education and continuing professional development, contributes to their students' achievement, and community engagement. This mutual enrichment through a community of practice is depicted in Khalid's testimonial

*"I try to benefit from the experienced teachers, and get new knowledge from their experience, so I must be seeking for new to improve my level and teacher roles"*.

In turn, as the participants have also identified, this means that the benefits of teacher leadership extend to other figures in the school, especially the headteacher.

### 5.5.3 Teacher leadership benefits to the headteachers

Seven participants in this research described how headteachers could improve the way they relate to both their professional and personal responsibilities, should teachers be empowered to maximize their professional engagement through leadership activities in the school reform processes. As seen in Table 19, there was a specific focus on the areas of headteachers being able to devote more time to their core responsibilities, and professional relations in the school.

Table 19: Teacher leadership benefits to Headteachers

Sub-Themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
Work on their professional issues and responsibilities	<p><i>“If you are a teacher leader, I think this will help the head teacher in many ways. He will find time for himself to concentrate on things that are important for him and for the leadership of head teaching, but if teachers are not leaders that means head teacher need to follow each one and it will be a difficult situation.”</i> (Ziad, Int)</p> <p>“My headteacher is very in cooperation with us. So in my role I want how to pay back him this. The teacher leader work on such difference.” (Ali, Int)</p> <p>“With the headteacher I break the obstacles between him and me.” (Raed, FG)</p>	7

By being responsible for all the stakeholders of the school, headteachers have many roles. One participant highlighted that headteachers are very busy and have

insufficient time to work with the specific subject teachers, including English-language teachers. Participants thought that headteachers could better “concentrate” on their many duties if freed from immediate supervision of their staff (Ziad, Int). Headteachers may also have difficulty establishing a positive, disciplined school environment if teachers are not trusted to act autonomously and professionally.

Participant Ali pointed out that the relationship is often reciprocal, which has positive implications when there is a good working dynamic:

*“My headteacher is very in cooperation with us. So my role I want how to pay back him this. The teacher leader work on such difference.”*

Although the teachers did not make specific or concrete claims about how working relationships with headteachers could be preserved, it was noted that a hierarchy that strictly separates teachers and headteachers has negative effects, such as the feelings of passivity discussed elsewhere. Raed in FG said that removing “obstacles” between teachers and headteachers through teacher leadership could have positive effects. Participants also agreed that in spite of top-down structures, it was also in the headteacher’s hands rather than the Ministry’s to develop structures in terms of professional relationships and, by extension, teacher leadership.

The overall benefits to teachers themselves, their colleagues and headteachers could by extension prove positive for students’ learning and education, both in the classroom and in the design and delivery of the curriculum; evidence on these two points is given below.

### 5.5.4 Teacher leadership benefits to the curriculum

In addition to the teacher leadership benefits participants mentioned above, other benefits were suggested that relate to the curriculum. Table 20 gives some example responses, relating specifically to the design and development of the curriculum.

Table 20 Teacher leadership benefits to the Curriculum

Sub-Themes	Data Evidence	No. of Responses
<i>Design and development</i>	<p><i>“It is very important and we have so many teachers and if we take the opinion of any teacher and we give a new way to how to develop this subject curriculum.” (Ali, Int)</i></p> <p>“If we work across the curriculum and coordinating our efforts to do that, this will impact positively to the profession of our teaching as well as the achievement of our students.” (Ali, RE)</p>	7

Seven of the teachers believed that they have the necessary teacher knowledge and experience to participate in the design of the curriculum as well as being able to choose the topics that can help their students. They were concerned, as in Ali's interview quoted above, with being engaged with the development of curriculum design, and their voice being not heard when they commented on the curricula they taught.

Several participants noted the value of freeing up teachers' time so they could contribute to the process of curriculum building and developing. To enhance the curriculum, participant Ali expressed an interest developing knowledge in order to play an increasing role in use of 'new ways'. A key point was mentioned also by Raed in his reflective essay, who claimed that teachers' inclusion in curriculum

building and development would impact positively on both the teaching of teachers and the learning of the students. Given the curricular challenges brought about by top-down changes and heavy curricula (see 2.5), the curriculum is an area in which teachers taking charge can be highly beneficial. The importance of reflective practice in this area was also noted:

*“...because at the end you are responsible about the curriculum and about the time or the period of time you have to finish the curriculum. The can encourage you evaluate yourself in your curriculum teaching. This is one important role evaluate yourself.”*

The reflection on teaching is a channel of professional knowledge, and it is surprising here that this teacher understands it in the process of his teaching and how this could impact on the curriculum and vice versa. This reflection on teaching can have also impacts on students' learning by modifying the teaching skills to fit the curriculum being taught.

The following section will consider the benefits of teacher leadership on the students' learning as the data revealed.

#### **5.5.5 Teacher Leadership benefits to Students**

Teachers indicated in several responses that teacher leadership roles can benefit both the school community and all its members, amongst which are the students. Eight participants reported that they want to act as teacher leaders, as this will have direct positive impact on student performance and behaviour, as shown in Table 21.

Table 21: Teacher leadership benefits to Students

Sub-Themes	Data Evidence	No of Responses
<p><i>Positive impact on students' learning and behaviour</i></p>	<p><i>"This element of teacher leadership reflects in any students. This will reflect positively on the student's behaviour and their education."</i> (Nasser, RE).</p> <p><i>"I can do more things, and I can use a topic from out the curriculum. I can do an exercise for the student, if I see that curriculum is not suitable for the student, I can order to change it for the student because in our curriculum now right now just include about listening. The student feel boring when he is studying this curriculum because the beginning to the end, just for listening foreigners."</i> (Ziad, Int.)</p> <p><i>"Teacher leader is a source motivation for students."</i> (Saleh, Int)</p> <p><i>"To my students, I think I will be as a guide, as a father with them, and encourage them. I have to look for their problems to help them."</i> (Raed, FG).</p>	<p>8</p>

Almost all participants mentioned that teacher leadership roles benefit their students, as stated by Nasser in his essay, they "reflect positively on the student's behaviour and their education". This is to be expected given how the participants largely centred their understanding of teacher leadership on the classroom, as discussed under Research Question 1. Moreover, teachers recognized the importance of being teacher leaders as this empowers them to better more effectively motivate their students. They wanted to have the capacity and the freedom to adopt materials and activities which help students understand the difficulties in their English-language learning (Ziad, Interview).

This capacity for teachers to lead in their profession could ignite their own motivation, which in turn is a source of motivation for their students (Saleh, Int). Participants also show that teacher leadership roles can be a source of guidance to students, as Raed in FG mentioned that he can be "as a guide, as a father with them, and encourage them." The students then could fulfil their potential and be empowered as legitimate learners, since their teachers have the motivation and empowerment to fully utilize their teaching expertise.

## 5.6 Summary

The chapter presents in detail the findings from the three data sets gathered, aligned as responses to the research questions. The main findings are that, on the whole, the participants have an informed desire to be better teacher leaders. They are able to identify ways in which to demonstrate this through their desired informal leadership practices inside and beyond their classrooms, but currently feel they lack the support from the MoE and their schools to do so. The participants, commenting on the situation in KSA, identified the need for better teacher leadership; however, they did not currently feel empowered to make this happen, which itself negatively affected their practice of teacher leadership.

The following chapter, Chapter 6, will present a thorough discussion of the reported findings in relation to the themes and sub-themes that characterised the answers given that relate to each research question.



## Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter provides discussion of the themes that arise from the answers of the research questions stated in Chapter 1, section 1.3, alongside the interrelated sub-themes and their links to existing literature, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks in Chapter 3, as well as the issues related to teacher leadership in Chapter 2. Having provided in Chapter 5 examples from the responses and an overview of how participants perceived the phenomenon of teacher leadership and how they regarded themselves and their practice with respect to being teacher leaders, this chapter builds on these descriptions. The discussion will first address the themes that appeared in the responses of the participants in regards to their understanding of the concept of teacher leadership. Secondly, I will then discuss the findings that relate to their current and desired roles of teacher leadership then their school context and beyond. Thirdly, a discussion of the skills that were reported as crucial for them to perceive themselves as teacher leaders will be provided, followed by a thorough discussion of the factors that enable or disable them from acting as teacher leaders. Finally, the chapter will discuss the desire of the participants to act as teacher leaders and the different benefits they reported as consequences of the roles of teacher leadership.

### 6.1 Understanding the concept of teacher leadership

The variety of different aspects of the concept of teacher leadership were evident in the attributes shared by the participants through the three data sets, in their answers to Research Question 1. These understandings of teacher leadership as a phenomenon cover areas of professional practices inside the classroom, practices beyond the classroom and practices that relate to their teacher knowledge and professionalism. The following section will discuss the theses

themes and the related sub-themes that appeared in the presented data in 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.1.3.

### **6.1.1 Teacher Leadership inside the classroom**

The responses to all three sub-themes that appeared in table 4 and presented in 5.1.1 provide evidence which addresses Question One regarding the views of the participants on the concept of teacher leadership, as it relates to practices inside classrooms. Indeed, there is a general tendency for teachers to prioritise this aspect of their understanding of teacher leadership, as seen in the responses to many of the themes in Chapter 5. The responses that relate to “inside classroom” practices indicate a belief that teacher leadership is related to activities in the classroom and the professional influence, through their teaching strategies, that they have on their students. The idea of building relationships with students is compatible with seeing teacher leaders as having a significant role in controlling and disciplining, which emphasises the decisional capital that teachers hold (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). However, there is continual overlap between the areas of a teacher’s practice, since relationships with students exist beyond the classroom and touch on the school community as well as issues of discipline, while teaching strategies must be developed through collaboration or training. Despite the lack of experience of many teachers beyond the classroom, and subsequent inexperience in many aspects of teacher leadership raised in the literature about the educational leadership in KSA (Chapter 2), the classroom nonetheless constitutes a vital springboard from which many understandings and authentic teacher leadership attributes emerge (Greenier & Whitehead, 2016), amongst them, teaching strategies. The development of an appropriate methodology for TESOL that is coherent for both the social context and the needs of the students is increasingly an issue that teachers are taking a greater stake in,

worldwide (Holliday, 1994). It is therefore not surprising that the evidence of this study points to this being important as a teacher leadership feature in Saudi Arabia. It is also significant that LaCoe (2008) mentioned that professional development, pedagogy, student discipline and classroom environment were key areas of teacher autonomy. The participants agreed that teacher leadership was vital to support these areas.

The classroom also was seen as the primary arena for teacher leadership, as the participants' responses suggest, is also seen in the literature review by Pounder (2006) when he refers to the concept of transformational classroom leadership. This kind of impact is one of the defining qualities of a teacher leader and could motivate teachers to develop their teaching strategies within their classrooms, to facilitate the processes of their students' learning as an attribute of teacher leadership (Fullan, 2001). Many participants linked leadership to better teaching and performance in the classroom; indeed, the notion of performing in the classroom is a strong part of the responses; a significant number of the participants (five) use this or a very similar term to describe their leadership concept or practice. This importance fits with the definition of teacher leadership captured by the current thesis, as discussed in the conceptual framework section in Chapter 3 (section 3.10) and will form part of the model proposed in Chapter 7.

Notably, almost all the participants connected teacher leadership directly to the classroom as their primary examples. This suggests, given the context described in Chapter 2, that the classroom also represents the boundary of the majority of the available experience; leadership roles outside the classroom, though understood, are rarely offered to teachers, limiting their opportunities to exercise their professional capacities there (Alsalahi, 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2014). The three

sub-themes discussed in section 5.1.1 (Relation with students, Teaching Strategies and Control and class management), though distinct, form aspects of the professional capital that teachers hold, containing elements of human, social and decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These also constitute the professional practice of teachers but do not exhaust it. The next section deals with a second core area of teachers' understanding of teacher leadership, moving beyond the boundaries of their classrooms.

### **6.1.2 Teacher leadership outside the classroom**

The data in table 5 that was presented in 5.1.2 showed that teachers considered the concept of teacher leadership to also cover areas beyond their classroom, to include their colleagues and the school community, extending their social and professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Teachers' ability to work well with their colleagues, the school community and how particular teachers can motivate staff and work effectively with others were attributes seen as important leadership qualities that construct the notion of teacher leadership for the participants. These abilities and activities can constitute professional CoPs that foster teacher leadership practices (Wenger, 2002) and forge close relationships with colleagues to develop professional capacity (Harris, 2003). It is encouraging that teachers are aware of maximising their professional agency to extend beyond their formal role inside the classroom, and the necessity for informal teacher leadership roles and collegiality in accomplishing this, despite the lack of formal framework in place institutionally to support this. Chapter 2 linked the marginalisation of teachers to the delivery of pre-determined content within the imprisonment of their classrooms (Mullick, 2013). It seems that despite these constraints, a form of teacher leadership – yet to be fully articulated – is already an

integral part of these teachers' perceptions. This, I argue, is an important starting point for further implementation of systems to support teacher leadership.

The participants thus concur with a number of researchers' findings that teachers viewed teacher leadership as extending their roles beyond the classroom. Grant (2008) identified teacher leadership with collegiality outside the classroom, school development outside the classroom and building communication in the community of the school. The views of the participants of this study that collegiality is a manifestation of teacher leadership in its most functional form are also supported by York-Barr & Duke (2004), who further defined teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement" (p. 287). As will be seen later in this discussion, teachers valued collegiality as an important leadership skill, as well as being naturally beneficial to their students. The respondents' definitions might also extend to agreement with Danielson (2006), who defined the role of the teacher leader as "not only to continue to teach students but also have influence that extends beyond their own school and elsewhere" (p.12). In terms of enacting teacher agency, empowerment and autonomy – important corollaries of teacher leadership – it is useful to recall the Dynamic Interrelational Spaces of teachers, as proposed by La Ganza (2008) (see 3.6) whereby teachers should also assume roles beyond their classroom at an institutional and societal level. As leadership roles move beyond the classroom, into the school community and beyond, teachers improve their influence over their profession and their pedagogy, as will be explored in the discussion later in this chapter concerning training and curriculum design.

The third area that respondents included in their definition of teacher leadership was teaching knowledge and professional development. This supports the teacher leadership roles within and beyond the classroom discussed above through the professional capital and expertise that teacher leaders can call upon.

### **6.1.3 Teacher knowledge and Professionalism**

The responses to all three sub-themes that appeared in table 6 and presented in 5.1.3 showed participants' understanding of teacher leadership in relation to their teacher knowledge and professionalism show similar concerns to those discussed in Chapter 3. Effective teaching practice could be the result of empowering teachers to function as autonomous professional teacher leaders, which in turn could build a sense of professional confidence and pride (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Fullan (2003) furthermore contends that teachers can become change agents partly because of the enrichment of their professional knowledge. The above literature supports the reportage of the participants in terms of how they felt empowered into leadership when they felt fulfilled and respected as professional teachers, who are perfectly capable of self-guiding.

Such participants' perceptions of the concept of teacher leadership appear to be consistent with Frost and Durrant (2004), who defined teacher leadership as “the exercise of leadership by teachers, all teachers, regardless of position; it is not a matter of designated role or delegation, but rather a matter of teachers’ agency and their choice in initiating and sustaining change” (p. 308). The participants’ views about the concept of teacher leadership are repeatedly linked to teachers’ professionalism and how they are able to make choices in their teaching. This agency reaches both within and beyond their classroom and how they are able to practice their professional knowledge, their professional practice and professional

engagement, regardless of their positions or specific professional roles. Fuller recognition of their professionalism is at the heart of teacher's frustrations with the current system, as will be seen later in this chapter.

Given the preceding discussion in 6.1.1, 6.1.2 and 6.1.3, teachers' level of awareness of the concept of teacher leadership may be surprising, as they are unlikely to have received any input in their training and professional development previously, as indicated in their answers to research question four and indicated by the overview of the Saudi teacher training context in Chapter 2. The data revealed that the Saudi English-language teachers have professional knowledge about the concept of teacher leadership, shown through the various aspects thereof discussed here.

However, this knowledge remains largely either classroom-based or fairly abstract. For example, the teachers' views did not consider the differences between formal and informal aspects of teacher leadership inside and beyond the classroom. This would certainly be explained by the limitations of the pre-service or in-service training they are likely to have received (see Chapter 2), as well as the system that shapes their daily work providing few opportunities for practical leadership experience outside the classroom (Alsalahi, 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2014). Training at university level undoubtedly impacts on the concept of teacher leadership that is carried forward into schools. However, as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) point out, old teaching beliefs can be adjusted and developed within schools, even years after a teacher's university training, and the readiness of participants to undertake CPD underlines this. Through developing the principles of teachers' professional capital, as discussed in Chapter 3, they can change and improve their teaching

leadership abilities through the implementation of a new perception of teacher leadership.

This further implies that building on existing informal roles and increasing the formalisation of these (Katezenmeyer and Moller (2001) may constitute an important starting point for successful implementation of a framework for teacher leadership, as it will support teachers in their professional capital built up through experience and CPD. Dove and Honigsfield's (2010) practical proposal of increasing the teaming up of teachers for planning, curriculum development or assessment may well be useful to encourage collegiality as part of working routines, thereby giving rise to interchangeable leadership roles drawing on each other's strengths, articulating rationales and enriching pedagogical decision-making. Through experiencing such roles, teachers would expand their schema and conceptual framework to develop a version of teacher leadership which is useful and appropriate to their context.

Having presented and discussed the participants' views on the concept of teacher leadership, it can be surmised that teachers generally have some understanding of the concept teacher leadership which is in line with current literature. However, it is conceded that further professional development and practical experience would be important to refine these understandings so that they may be operationalised within their teaching contexts. The following section will move on to discuss the findings that relate to the current and desired practices of teacher leadership in intermediate and secondary Saudi public schools, and how their perceived definitions of the teacher leadership concept are reflected in how they construct their views of its practices in their schools.



## 6.2 Current and Desired Practices and roles of Teacher Leadership

The data presented in section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 showed that participants held different views about the roles of teacher leadership. However, there was a consensus that there are no current roles of teacher leadership in their working context. They spoke about their desired roles based on how they viewed teacher leadership. Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 respectively will discuss these desired roles, with their sub-themes, as established through the examples in Tables 7 and 8.

### 6.2.1 Leadership roles inside the classroom:

The responses to all three sub-themes that appeared in table 7 and presented in 5.2.1 showed that while it was evident from participants that teacher leaders perform a cognitive and pedagogical role, in the facilitator role the teacher leader concentrates on enabling the students' life-long learning, while an effective teacher must also manage and control a classroom. The teacher leader helps students to acquire practical skills, values and attitudes to succeed in their learning and prepare them for advanced careers that will build the future society of Saudi Arabia, as per the Kingdom's 'Vision 2030' (see Chapter 2); this assertion grounds many of the recommendations given in Chapter 7.

The various studies referred to in Chapter 3 about the domains and roles of teacher leadership generally concur with the consensus among this study's Saudi EFL participants, that teacher leader roles within the classroom include promoting overall improvement, not merely meeting curriculum targets. Thus, teaching and leading can be seen as interrelated activities through which the instructional, professional and organisational capacities of teacher can be developed in the classroom (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The repeated linking of leadership and

teaching practice made by the participants underscores this view. Curci (2012) similarly stated that “much of the student performance success of recent years can be attributed to the efforts of teachers planning and presenting during in-service days” (p.107). This links to the importance placed on classroom practice by participants in their conception of teacher leadership; being a good teacher – providing knowledge, open support and appropriate discipline – is simultaneously a form of leadership. The data also tellingly revealed that there are no *available* roles for teacher leadership, and the participants only speak about their *desired* ones: “The channels available are very few” (Raed, FG). This tension will be explored further later in this study. The perceived desired roles of teacher leaders do not only include teaching and learning inside classrooms, but also roles outside the classroom, aspects of which are discussed below.

### **6.2.2 Teacher Leader Roles outside the Classroom**

The responses to all three sub-themes that appeared in table 8 and presented in 5.2.2 revealed that teacher leadership roles outside the classroom can serve as a connecting bridge between teacher colleagues, to maximize their professional capital outside their classrooms, because they can interact with each other, be mutually supportive, and collaborate more successfully than when individually restricted to the professionally isolating domain of the classroom. Teacher leaders within Saudi schools could thus serve as internal resources and on-site experts who facilitate on-going professional interactions – unlike one-shot Ministry-led workshops that do not really lead to improved teaching practices (Alseghayer, 2014). The participants in this study were keen to fulfil this potential role. One of the contributions of the teacher leaders in the professional development of colleagues took the form of serving as demonstration teachers, conducting training sessions for fellow teachers, and being teacher mentors on a daily basis. These

are supplemented by other community-facing aspects of teachers' human and social capital, such as being a mediator with the school hierarchy, getting involved in extra-curricular activities, and building the community.

To sum up, participants in this research identified teacher leadership roles as based not only on roles and positions or within the classroom arena. Indeed, the even distribution of responses over all participants, rather than all identifying a limited number of roles, suggests that roles overlap. Instead, teachers viewed their roles using their informal agency to act in school development, regardless of positions of leadership. Conceptions of teacher leadership in some previous research support this, by describing teacher roles as not a matter of designation or delegation to take on leadership roles in the school, but rather as an act of teachers' agency to initiate and sustain change (Frost & Durrant, 2004).

In addition, literature on school development has stressed the potential of teachers' involvement in school improvement which, in turn, supports the main aim of education, which is to improve students' learning so that they become active in their society's and nation's development (Harris & Muijs, 2005). The data repeatedly showed teachers' commitment to making a difference to the lives and outcomes of their students, which shows moral purpose (Bezzina, 2007). This sense of a moral purpose is seen in some of the participants' responses, such as when they insist on striving for self-betterment, serving their students, and maximising their professional potential.

On the whole, the findings showed that despite a lack of formal recognition of teacher leadership roles in the context, exemplified also in their responses to research question 4, teachers nonetheless undertake, or aim to, a significant number of informal roles both inside and beyond the classroom. This is in line with

the findings of Sides (2010), who showed that unrecognised and informal leadership exists in schools even if they are not delegated. In terms of the desired roles, KSA EFL teachers have shown that they can make a valuable contribution to envisioning which roles would ensure improvements in the running of the school community.

The following section will next consider how this vision would be enacted by the teachers through their teacher leadership. It will discuss how teachers, irrespective of the availability of the desired roles described above, reported themselves as teacher leaders, based on what they defined as teacher leadership and the roles they would like to take up.

### **6.3 Teachers' Understanding of themselves as Teacher Leaders**

The data that answered research Question 3 indicated that teachers were enthusiastic and highly engaged when reflecting on their perceptions of themselves as teacher leaders. They repeatedly mentioned a common set of skills they believed necessary to be teacher leaders. The findings are discussed under the three main themes identified in Chapter 5: personal skills, professional skills and decisional skills. The following section will discuss themes that were reported in 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 with the related sub-themes that appeared in tables 9, 10 and 11.

#### **6.3.1 Personal Skills**

The data that appeared in table 9 and presented in 5.3.1 showed that undoubtedly, the teacher leadership qualities are congruent with the roles teachers are likely to play in their daily practice – that is, as teachers foremost, and subsequently teacher leaders. The recurrent lexicon of personal qualities in this study corroborates the findings of Greenier & Whitehead (2016), who argue that

teacher leadership can emerge by teachers enriching their existing skills set. Arriaza and Krovetz (2006) have suggested that “being leaders in a school that builds leadership capacity requires skills in working with the resistance and resisters” (p.39). Clearly, being active, friendly, kind and patient are vital for social cohesion, and can command considerable leverage for effecting change and moving beyond the *status quo*.

The reported personal qualities are seen in effective teacher leaders as fundamental skills and can be viewed as elements of human capital, according to the definition discussed in Chapter 3 (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Teachers perceive themselves to be exercising teacher leadership by means of their human capital (Frost, 2012), which in the context of this study is demonstrated through the consistent enactment of particular qualities. The high response among participants shows that these qualities are well-recognised and articulated. Many teachers and headteachers would indeed like to work with teachers exhibiting such personal qualities for guidance, and teachers with such skills tend to seek leadership positions and teacher leader roles, formal and informal, within their schools (Gabriel, 2005). Communication, a positive attitude and perseverance were all noted as valuable personal attributes. Above all, teacher leaders are envisaged in this study as active participants in all aspects of the school, something that the data showed as both an essential personal quality and a rejection of the passivity of the teacher role often seen in KSA as will be discussed later in the findings that relate to Research 5. This is also shown in the responses to research question five, where the participants indicated that they were eager to act as teacher leaders in their schools.

The personal skills of teacher leaders help them to act professionally and to be social in their relationships in their schools. The section below will discuss the professional and social skills that appeared in the reported data, as characterising how the participants view themselves as teacher leaders.

### **6.3.2 Professional and Social Skills**

The data that appeared in table 10 and presented in 5.3.2 showed that the participants reflected the complex picture of the teacher leader as a professional and social figure in the school. As argued in Chapter 3, recognising teaching as a social activity and not just the fulfilment of tasks allows an understanding of the very wide range of skills involved in the profession. Participants depicted themselves as possessing the sufficient human capital necessary to act as autonomous agents in dynamic interrelational spaces (La Ganza, 2008). However, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, teachers may sometimes have a negative relationship with authority or leadership, due to the strict boundaries created by the top-down administrative culture. This is certainly reflected in the finding of the current study – both through the perceived negative relation between teachers and the MoE, and in how the highest rate of responses referred to in-class learning facilitators, identifying teachers with their work in classrooms. As passive recipients of tasks they are not encouraged to think of themselves as part of the governance of the school, and a teacher leader would need personal and interpersonal skills to overcome such perceptions. However, the teacher leader who promotes professional development can be an important bridge between teachers and the school; not all teachers will want to do more training, so leading by example as well as through training is important for establishing a community of practice.

As noted when analysing the three data sets, participants linked the noted skills to what this study classifies as their professional and social capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2006). The data confirmed the assertions of Crowther (2009) and Danielson (2006): teacher leaders are active in the leadership process, confident in pedagogical practices, social in relationship building as well as competent in teaching and learning professional knowledge. This is also in line with Curci (2012) who noted that “teacher leaders who can recruit the efforts of others and facilitate a workable environment can make huge strides for their school community” (p.49).

The personal and professional skills of teacher leadership can guide them to act in their profession; however, the perceived capacity of teacher leaders to make good decisions based on their professional and personal judgment represents another significant area emerging from the data.

### **6.3.3 Decisional Skills**

As the data in table 11 has shown and the data presented in 5.3.3, teacher leaders are described in terms of a range of decisional skills, which foster and enhance pedagogy and its delivery. The sub-themes refer to individuals who are organised, authoritative and flexible. These perceptions of teacher leaders cover a wide scope of roles and character aspects, including aspects of management, discipline and strategy. The tendency for teacher leaders to be ascribed a very wide range of competencies has been noted before in the discussions of York-Barr & Duke (2004) and Gabriel (2005). This illustrates that it is common amongst teachers to perceive and value differing qualities that represent leadership within themselves and others. The variety may further be linked to the variety of understandings of the role of teacher leaders expressed by participants (see Research Question 1), as well as the limited opportunities that many teachers in this context have had for

taking on such roles, leaving their views of the concept at a general rather than concrete level.

The reported skills are underpinned by professional capital theory (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), which helps distinguish the skills by dividing them into three particular areas: human capital, social capital and decisional capital. The reported skills have been identified according to this matrix, and need to be recognized as the components of teacher leaders' professional capital to build and maximize their professional engagement, to act in the roles of teacher leaders.

Teachers' responses indicate an awareness of professional capital. This relates to their awareness that they have the knowledge and skills to determine the best teaching methodology. Notwithstanding, the responses of the participants are to some extent surprising as they did not mention a number of qualities that leaders generally have in common. Many of these qualities are seen in effective teachers, such as "organization, honesty, empathy, resourcefulness, decisiveness, and intelligence" (Gabriel, 2005, p.22). It is plausible to consider that the teachers interviewed have a different outlook because of their top-down context (see Chapter 2) where such an active role for teachers, as denoted by qualities such as resourcefulness and decisiveness, is not the norm.

The importance of individual teacher control, and the failure to frame this within a discourse of shared responsibilities constituting a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2002) may to some extent mirror the top-down approach to control and management practised by authorities in the context (Shah, 2014). Despite these issues, it has been demonstrated that throughout, Chapter 2, Saudi educational system is nonetheless aware of the need for leaders to be active and share their responsibilities and practice. The priority will therefore reside in the need to raise



awareness on how this can be achieved in practice. This in turn implies a need for a clear role recognition and code of practice which can be used to underpin, develop and define potential teacher leadership roles and responsibilities, thereby marking a departure from current lack of formal support for teacher leadership institutionally. Chapter 7 addresses some of these concerns through recommendations for future practice and research.

From the reported findings and discussions that relate to the first three questions, participants have shown awareness about teacher leadership as a concept and the desired roles that relate to it. They also shown an eagerness to perceive themselves as teacher leaders and described this by pointing out different skills that they see as necessary for teacher leaders. This professional capital naturally also need the opportunity to flourish, and several factors might support or block teacher's ability to take up or perform well in leadership roles.

The section below therefore discusses the factors that the participants viewed as enabling or disempowering them in utilizing their human and decisional capital as teacher leaders in their schools.

#### **6.4 Factors enabling or disempowering teacher leadership practices**

The findings reported in sections 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.4 and 5.4.5 illustrate a general consensus that Saudi English-language teachers face challenges in building their capacity for teacher leadership. In all three data sets, as shown in tables 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16, the participants enumerated multiple factors which disempower them from being teacher leaders, and were much keener to discuss these than those that empower them, most likely due to the lack of current leadership opportunities, as discussed earlier. Pre-empting the specific research

question focusing on the constraints, participants had already offered suggestions relating to these in reference to earlier questions, thereby indicating the prominence of this issue. The themes defined in this section capture several types of barriers or requirement for teacher leadership practices: recognition, guidance and support, pre- and in- service training and professional development, teachers' voice, and school culture

#### **6.4.1 Role recognition and clarity**

The findings reported in table 12 and presented in sections 5.4.1 indicated that the present educational hierarchy in KSA often limits the ability of teachers to display agency in any teacher leadership roles, or to participate in distributed leadership planning and instruction. In the context of KSA, the data revealed that teachers can have nominal positions – such as on the school board and the teacher council – yet these roles do not in fact promote active engagement or a culture of shared responsibility. The system is centralized and gives little room for teachers to act beyond their classrooms. Similarly, the headteacher's role is limited to a managerial one and to extending control over teachers and students (Al-Abbas, 2010). The overall findings corroborate this repeated narrative of constraints on teacher leadership, especially the lack of opportunities and clear descriptions of roles.

Previous literature which considered the creation and formalisation of teacher leadership roles may well be useful in addressing the issues raised by the participants regarding the Saudi context. As well as meeting one of the challenges mentioned by the participants, increased specialisation and the accompanying definition of roles can be related to enhanced performance (Bolman and Deal, 2003). Specialists are better able to take on responsibilities in their area, and have

a supporting structure that aids professionalization. To achieve the professionalization of teachers in their new roles, three main factors should be borne in mind; firstly, the drawing up of institutionally recognised (Galland, 2008) and clear job descriptions linked to the relevant professional competencies, as asked for in the examples given in Table 12; secondly, a consideration of their interconnectedness within the community of practice and; thirdly, flexibility and on-going negotiation of roles for teachers to enact their teacher agency in an effective way. This implies significant changes for schools and the Ministry. It may therefore be useful to share practice from other countries where these roles have already been implemented to discuss to what extent these could be incorporated within a new model that accounts for the views and context of Saudi English-language teachers, such as discussed in this study.

#### **6.4.2. Support and Guidance**

The findings reported in table 13 and presented in sections 5.4.2 that comments in this section illustrate a considerable lack of support for teachers. Several previous studies have similarly established that teachers need constructive guidance, support and help from superiors and peers, and have identified the same areas of shortcomings and potential for improvement. The findings seem to concur with Shah's (2014) argument that the absence of appreciation, trust and encouragement leads to the marginalization of teachers in their professional context. This is also in line with the views of Bailey (2008), who asserts that encouragement is an important factor in teacher leaders' roles in ELT. There was little sign among the participants in this study that they felt encouraged and supported, whether in daily work or to take on leadership roles. Likewise, Hobbs and Moreland (2009) mentioned that professional learning, autonomy, and engagement in decision-making processes can be important elements in the

empowerment that teachers receive from the school headship team. Birky et al. (2006) went even further to argue that without recognition, encouragement and support, teacher leaders were unlikely to be successful. It therefore seems appropriate to assume the relevance of York-Barr and Duke (2004) and Leithwood et al. (2004) who suggest that support should be provided for teachers to act with agency in leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, teacher leadership appears to flourish in schools where headteachers are willing to distribute some positions and roles to teacher leaders (Muijs & Harris, 2007). Teachers in this study have shown themselves aware of the lack of such roles in their context, while still suggesting that given the opportunity and support they could fulfil them.

It is similarly important to empower teachers with promotions and rewards to encourage them in their professionalism and creativity. The teachers perceived their rewards or motivations as incentives and encouragement that support them as teacher leaders, and they all require the correct professional and pastoral guidance and support. It is apparent that these factors are likely to have significant implications for the sustainability of a teacher leadership system in Saudi Arabia which is in line Muijs and Harris (2006).

The participants recognized the MoE – represented in each educational directorate – and headteachers of the schools as factors that either support or disempower teachers to act as teacher leaders. Often teachers are excluded from decision-making processes, which leaves them without the support of those in power. Without the trust of decision makers, and the feeling of respect that reflects such trust, teachers seem unwilling or unable to take on the roles of teacher leadership with confidence. The importance of this form of support is recognised in previous research, which notes the crucial role of headteachers in allowing teacher

leadership practices to flourish and enhancing teachers' agency by maximizing their professional engagement in the different school reforms (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). Beyond merely allocating new roles, headteachers can either hinder or enable the notion of teacher leadership by affecting teachers' "beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, given that other teachers do shape them in their colleagues" (Donaldson, 2007, p.29). This raises parallel implications in terms of the need for training of the Ministry and headteachers, so that they are able to raise the status of the teaching profession and share out some of the decisional capital, as is discussed in the next section. Headteachers in Saudi Arabia should be empowered to act as key drivers for the professionalization and improvement to conditions of teachers. A willingness to engage in this goal is an important precursor which will certainly facilitate the area discussed in the following section: achieving professional potential through training and development.

#### **6.4.3 Training and professional development**

The findings reported in table 14 and presented in sections 5.4.3 that It can be inferred from the responses that the Ministry of Education should focus on meeting the teachers' needs, and empowering them through pre- and in- service training programmes. Teachers say that they should have been taught theories of teacher leadership in the preparatory year during their study in universities. There was also a call for more varied and targeted training, rather than standardised content and delivery.

The findings of all three data sets showed that the participants thought of education and training for teacher leadership in terms of a number of points. Training is important before appointing somebody to be a teacher leader. Teachers should be guided and helped by supervisors at the beginning of their

professional path until they are qualified through experience to be teacher leaders. Training for teacher leadership should start from the preparatory year in Saudi universities for those studying for a career in English teaching; this training should continue even when teachers are working in the profession, as in-service training.

The views expressed highlight the perception that they, as EFL teachers, are unsupported in their agency as leaders in the classroom, and that they would benefit from focused leadership training, which would have cascading benefits for the students and school community. The importance of teacher education for teacher leaders is frequently recognised in the existing literature, as is the importance of continuous professional development of all staff, which includes formal and informal leaders, as it unifies staff in working collaboratively towards achieving a shared vision and purpose (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Murphy, 2005). The words and experiences of the participants corroborate *a priori* understandings of the problems caused by a lack of effective training in the area of teacher leadership. However, the phenomena depicted through the voices of these participants provide additional empirical evidence to support the assertion that professional in-service training is sorely needed, as previous research into the context of Saudi Arabia has indicated (Mahdly, 2001; Al-Ameel, 2002). This also lends weight to the argument that immediate interventions as well as long-term sustainable measures are needed to ameliorate problems and initiate a culture of change. Appropriate training is an important enabler for good teacher leadership and the development of new pedagogical practice. In addition, teachers need to be listened to in building the structure and content of their professional learning and education. It is an encouraging but challenging contention that “when teachers have a voice in determining professional development learning opportunities, they typically assume

responsibilities for their professional growth” (Akert, 2009). The participants questioned seem eager to assume this responsibility, but are facing a system that inadequately prepares them for teaching, and does little to promote real professional development.

In direct contrast to the positive perceptions of taking up teacher leadership roles, Raed (Int, Table 14) showed little faith in his colleagues who should have been empowered to offer effective training and educational leadership, as he regarded the trainers as knowing little more, or less, than he did as a regular teacher. This may be linked to the dissonance observed between expectations and actual perceptions of teacher leaders (Kiranh, 2013), where what teachers expected of teacher leaders and what they actually experienced or perceived was marked. With the drive for professionalization, it is hoped that the competence and status of teacher leaders will allow them to be seen as specialists in their field by colleagues rather than ‘just fellow teachers.’ But as a cautionary note, a recent assessment of current skills of teachers and teacher leaders in Saudi Arabia (Al-Seghayer, 2014) would imply that a steep learning curve and considerable commitment are required for all concerned to achieve progress through training. With regards specifically to TESOL, Al-Seghayer (2014) goes on to claim that linguistically, many teachers do not yet show sufficient ability to be leaders in their subject discipline. This may be largely due to inadequate training (Alhazmi, 2003). Although some of the responses by the teachers in this study would contest this depiction of their professional skills and knowledge – for example exhibited in their eagerness to conduct the interviews in English – and the awareness of teacher leadership factors the collected data shows, some of the inadequacies in the current system identified do undeniably reflect the answers given.

On the whole, teachers speak in this study of their frustration that what little training is available pays scant heed to their needs as teachers and individuals; they have no say in how the training is developed or delivered. As is discussed in the next section, the importance of teachers' voices being heard in these and other related matters needs to be recognised.

#### **6.4.4 Teachers' Influence and Empowerment**

The findings reported in table 15 and presented in sections 5.4.4 that almost all the participants expressed their frustration at having no voice in leading or guiding curriculum development, their evaluation processes and the processes of decision-making that relate to their profession. They mention specific areas of decision-making that teachers feel distanced from, including classroom methods, and curriculum design, as shown in Table 15.

This means that the Ministry of Education should give autonomy and agency to teachers to act as teacher leaders, as suggested by Ali in FG: "We need freedom and space to practice their leadership and teaching, not to be restricted and controlled." In making these claims, teachers see themselves as eligible to take the lead beyond their classrooms and participate in different educational processes. The recurring references to freedom to be teachers denotes a frustration with the current system but also a willingness to continue striving to fulfil their professional potential. The Ministry of Education should be committed to removing the difficulties that face teachers, in order to help them to function effectively, by offering their constructive opinions and efforts. This kind of teacher leadership is mentioned and emphasized by Little (2002) who viewed teacher leadership as delivered by "intellectual professionals through their subject expertise" (p.922). This acknowledges that teachers are experts in their fields as



well as performing daily classroom duties, with the capacity to formulate wide-reaching and long-term suggestions for their subjects and their school community. Many teachers desire to play a role in or have greater input into how business is done in their school and, as a minimum, wish to be respected for their expertise and successes in their individual classrooms, as elements of the professional capital.

The experience of having their voices ignored is creating an environment in which the diametric opposite of teacher leadership is manifesting itself. The teachers reported feeling disempowered, unsupported, insignificant and isolated in their professional posts. These effects upon the education environment in which they function are recognised in other studies; for instance, the hindrance to teacher leader agency (Hoy and Hoy, 2009). All these negative feelings work against the establishing of successful communities of practice, and stifle teachers' professionalism.

In the Saudi context, most of the teachers – EFL teachers among them – have no voice in educational affairs (Mullick, 2014). Teachers are not encouraged to voice their opinions and may feel unsafe in expressing their possibly controversial viewpoints. The findings of this study are in line with both Alseghayer (2014), who described the role as limited to being a deliverer of pre-determined content rather than a leader of innovative learning contexts, and Al-Saadat & al-Braik (2004) as unquestioning followers of the MoE's directions. Such uniformity of view and denial of leadership opportunities is experienced as a frustration, as the responses above have illustrated. Similar effects can be seen in the shortcomings felt by the teachers about the school culture within which they work as discussed below.

#### 6.4.5 School Culture

The findings reported in table 16 and presented in sections 5.4.5 showed that data teachers intuited the importance of strong relationships, and the school as a community, though most often citing the negative effects of a negative school culture in terms of teacher leadership. The teachers also identified that relationships and communication within and beyond the classroom enhance cooperation between the stakeholders inside the school, and help teacher establish a better culture and atmosphere around their professional practice. This includes creating a comfortable and supporting environment for teachers, as well as students. For example, Ali in his interview mentioned that teachers need “Better communication and relationships between teachers [which] enhance integration and cooperation to help teachers achieve best results.” Although pressure from supervisors and headteachers is noted, the findings do not go as far as to suggest a worrying culture of blame and bullying as seen in DeMore Palmer’s (2011). This may however be a warning of the potential negative consequences to be aware of when new roles emerge.

Teachers see that the school culture and structure should aim to provide a comfortable and supporting environment. However, they did not suggest specific ways in which a better atmosphere could be created, which differs from other studies such as Muijs & Harris (2007): when teachers already had experience of leadership, they were able to provide more concrete details of scope for improvement. To some extent, this lack of response in the present research may be related to the design and research questions, which did not probe this specific angle, even though the interview and essay formats used were designed to encourage honest and individual responses. Participants nonetheless, I contend, would benefit from teacher development which raises awareness on the innovative

practice and perennial problems noted in recent studies such as Fairman and Mackenzie (2015), which focused on contexts in which teacher leadership is reasonably well established.

With this qualification noted, throughout, the teachers emphasized the importance of school culture and environment to empower them as teacher leaders. Saleh in his reflective essay states that: "School structure help teachers to be leaders to make them happy and feel enthusiastic about their work." It is clear that the participants show some awareness of the need to subvert top-down hierarchical systems and highlights that they do not perceive high power distance (Hofstede, 2010) as fixed or insurmountable and some already note potential opportunities in existing structures. They are therefore aware of the effects, particularly on teachers, of positive or negative school cultures, even if they were not forthcoming about how a more positive culture might be brought about practically. This can be linked to their lack of opportunities of experience of leadership, so that they do not have the insight or motivation to consider how to take on roles as change agents.

Overall, the responses noted here on the issue of school culture demonstrate the importance of a positive environment, referring to similar benefits and obstacles to those identified in previous research such as Arriaza and Krovetz (2006), Danielson (2006) and Frost (2012), Nevertheless, the endemic issue of excessive workload as a barrier to teacher leadership matched the literature (Barth, 2001, Gerrard, 2004, Suranna & Moss, 2000). Indeed, developing policy which addresses this to mitigate this constraint will be a priority if stakeholders are serious about teacher leadership gaining momentum.

This study showed that those teachers who viewed themselves as legitimate leaders wanted to take on different opportunities to participate in teacher

leadership activities and the general school development plans – if they were provided to them.

## **6.5 Teachers' desires to act as teacher leaders**

Coding of participants' responses frequently showed their eagerness to be involved in the school developmental plans and strategic actions, especially those which may affect teachers' work, their classroom and teaching issues. Relatedly, the responses reveal that the Saudi English-language teachers perceived many ways in which teacher leadership could be beneficial. These can be grouped according to the area of impact: Students; Continuing Professional Development; Colleagues; Headteachers; Curriculum; School community. The following sections will discuss data reported in sections 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 5.5.4 and 5.5.5 with their related sub-themes that appeared in Tables 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21.

### **6.5.1 Teacher leadership benefits to themselves**

Evidence from this study as reported in table 17 and presented in 5.5.1 seemed to be consistent with the literature, including Muijs and Harris (2006), who asserted that “one of the main reasons given for the importance of teacher leadership in improving schools was the way it empowered teachers, seen as a key motivating factor that ultimately improved their performance” (p.966). Taking on additional leadership roles, where appropriately supported, is not regarded as an extra job or chore, but as an opportunity for improved efficacy. In addition, participants stated that involvement of teachers in school leadership activities offers teachers opportunities for continuous learning, which in turn helps “to shape their own schools and, thereby, their own destinies as educators” (Barth, 2001). Muijs and Harris (2006) also stressed that the collaborative work of teacher leadership in schools helps to make knowledge transfer and knowledge generation happen,

which the participants here also intimated. Although participants mentioned that they can act as professionals in modelling some lesson to their colleagues, they can act as supervisors, however, they are limited to their professional recognition as teacher leaders. This is evidenced in the context of Saudi public education as discussed in Chapter 2 (Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alsalahi, 2015)

Furthermore, through the same processes that increased their personal professional competence, participants identified that their empowerment as teacher leaders could maximize their professional capital to help their peers and colleagues. This will be discussed in the next section.

#### **6.5.2 Teacher leadership benefits to colleagues**

Evidence from this study as reported in table 18 and presented in 5.5.2 showed that participants stated within their focus group, one-to-one interview and reflective essays sessions, benefits to colleagues through collaboration with other teachers can be facilitated by teacher leadership. Several studies into this area similarly promote professional alliance as an asset to the school community. Teachers as leaders can “guide fellow teachers as well as the school at large toward higher standards of achievement and individual responsibility for school reform” (Childs-Bowen et al., 2000). This helps teachers to foster a climate of collective responsibility so they learn from each other in their schools (Arriaza and Krovetz, 2006). The opportunity for teachers to express their ideals through collaboration with colleagues can build collective education where teachers learn from each other through their informal meeting and teacher development activities inside their schools. This could promote collegial collaboration around teaching and the learning of their students, and their professional growth. Importantly, such co-operation depends on a school culture and structure that gives teachers the time,

freedom and resources required, meaning that positive relationships must also be built with the administrators of the school. In turn, as the participants have also identified, this means that the benefits of teacher leadership extend to other figures in the school, especially the headteacher.

### **6.5.3 Teacher leadership benefits to Headteachers**

Evidence from this study as reported in table 19 and presented in 5.5.3 indicated that the perceptions about the benefits to headteachers of teacher leadership, centred around freeing up headteachers' time and resources by allowing teachers greater autonomy, and on building up mutually supporting practices in the school hierarchy, are also reflected in other studies, where teacher leadership can be seen as a source of help to headteachers leading the school's development, since it is too complex to run and develop alone (Kise and Russell, 2009; Williams, 2009). The benefits to headteachers through teacher leadership, as seen and described by the participants, corroborate the claims of other studies, such as when Muijs and Harris (2006) state that: "The fact that teacher leadership allows senior managers to tap into a larger pool of ideas and solutions to problems was also seen as a highly positive outcome of teacher leadership contributing to improvement" (p.966).

These actions and their positive consequences by teacher leaders can assist with the distribution of power and with meeting targets, which can help take pressure off headteachers. The overall benefits to teachers themselves, their colleagues and headteachers could by extension prove positive for students' learning and education, both in the classroom and in the design and delivery of the curriculum. These outcomes will be discussed in the next two sections.

#### **6.5.4 Teacher leadership benefits to the curriculum**

Data that was reported in table 20 and presented in 5.5.4 revealed that the perceptions reported of how EFL teachers can benefit the school structure by practicing leadership in how they use the existing curriculum, and how they could develop it – and what may happen if they were empowered to do so in Saudi Arabia. This echoes the writings of Harrison (2007), as well as other studies, as discussed in the literature review chapter, which argue that the inclusion of teachers as leaders in such roles has obvious value: “Roles such as instructional or curriculum specialist, mentor, data coach, and change catalyst all lend to the professional training of many members” (Harrison, 2007). Similar roles have been identified by some participants, such as “mentors” and “master teachers” suggested by Kamal in the reflective essay. Data also revealed that if teachers are more engaged in the curriculum they helped design, and the curriculum more closely matches what experienced teachers see as suitable for their particular students. This is also in line with Wedell (2003) who emphasized that TESOL curricula are often insensitive to context and require mediation not only by subject experts, but by experts in the specific socio-cultural context. The participants showed willingness to accept this role in principle, as has been the recurring theme of this chapter. This can extend the benefits to the students as will be discussed below.

#### **6.5.5 Teacher leadership benefits to students**

Evidence from this study as reported in table 21 and presented in 5.5.5 showed that, throughout, participants have linked teacher leadership to the benefits it will mean for students in their classroom, as teachers are more effective, better trained, and more involved in the school as a community. Teachers repeatedly refer to student successes as the main reason for school development. In the

examples in section 5.5.5 some further specific benefits have been identified, as teachers who are motivated through leadership opportunities are better models for their students and have the capacity to build more effective relationships with them.

This kind of relationship with the students suggests a level of individuation – of treating the students as people not just numbers. And this kind of teaching requires that the teacher has enough time to get to know his students and enough freedom to adjust his lessons to help the individuals in his class. This can result in the educators gaining the students' respect as caring and inspiring leaders. This in turn will have positive impacts on the student's identity and status as capable learners who feel respected and at home in a positive learning environment. Such ideas, especially the notion of respect, were brought up in the reflective essays, as well as Raed in FG, who stressed the importance of the teacher-student relationship.

Fully-empowered Saudi English-language teacher leaders will have skills and attitudes which can increase and spread within the school community, and students will get the competent help and support that enables their constructive education, by receiving more opportunities from their teachers to engage in learning practices. Thus, it is germane that teacher leaders should be encouraged to support and develop their potential, and dedicate their skills and knowledge to promoting their students' knowledge and skills. The aforementioned gains of teacher leadership can encourage educationalists to take action and view teacher leadership as a radical transformation (Reeves, 2008) as research indicates a direct relationship between teacher leadership and the learning of the students (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002).



The students benefit in direct and indirect ways if teachers are motivated and properly equipped with the right skills and resources to teach them, as shown by the range of responses quoted in the table above; it can indeed be argued that this serves the moral purposes of teaching – dedication to students – that so many teachers feel is part of their profession, as discussed in Chapter 3. Fullan (1993) suggests that: “Allowing teachers to stay close to the needs of their students, teachers empowered as change agents causes them to develop better strategies for accomplishing their moral goals” (p.12). Indeed, this quote appears to be particularly apposite given the plethora of examples which participants offer to demonstrate how their teacher leadership could be directly linked to improving students’ learning

As was shown in the understandings of teacher leadership mentioned earlier in their answers to research question one, teachers connect teacher leadership very closely with the results in their classrooms; much of their professional capital is invested in their students’ achievements. Curci (2012) claims that “much of the student performance success of recent years attributed to the efforts of teachers planning and presenting during in-service days” (p.107). Arriaza and Krovetz (2006) also make the case that teacher leaders are most likely to empower their students to understand their own learning processes and release their intellectual potential.

As the preceding discussion has shown, the participants of this study were able to identify many channels through which teacher leaders could positively influence their profession and practice, from every level from curriculum design to school community, to collegiality to personal professional development. And naturally, the

ultimate concern is the possibility of improving the service they can provide to their students.

## 6.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has discussed the findings that emerged from the combination of the three data sets, in order to show how the overview given in Chapter 5 connects with existing literature and the theoretical framework of this study. Common thoughts and attitudes running through the diverse responses of the participants, as well as how similar ideas have been uncovered or supported in previous research, help to build up a picture of the participants' experiences and understandings of teacher leadership.

Surprisingly, although the participants mentioned a number of factors that prevented them from being teacher leaders in their schools, they still recognized themselves as legitimate leaders, at least in potential. This indicates that their agency, voice and identity are of paramount importance to their practices and the practices of others, such as head teachers, colleagues, students and supervisors. They believed that under the right conditions, they have the professional capital to practise their leadership inside and beyond their classrooms. The data revealed that these Saudi English-language teachers recognized themselves as having a rich resource of professional capital through their professional learning, professional practice and professional engagement in the different pedagogical and school development activities. However, the lack of specific suggestions given by the teachers about practical changes that they could implement, what kinds of resources specifically would enhance their teacher leadership, and how they might engage with the school community (with the exception of classroom and training elements, on which they were more concrete) show the gap between the potential

for leadership that they understand and desire, and their own training in and experience of leadership opportunities. This clearly points to the untapped potential of teachers and the possibilities of dramatic results if they are given the opportunities to lead that they and other studies identify, but also suggests that teachers' inexperience may be a further obstacle to be overcome, as they first need to exercise their capacities for taking the initiative before they can fully form and express their contributions to school development.

These developmental needs imply that teachers must be engaged at a professional level instead of being dealt with as passive agents. As O'Brien (2007) argues: "a school has a capacity to mobilise growth in professional capital through providing opportunities for the holistic formation of the teacher as a professional and as one who leads in professional practice and learning" (p.6).

This awareness among EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia of their agency and identity as legitimate leaders needs to be recognized. Not to do so has visible negative impacts on the process of teaching and learning. Given the educational reforms and global outlook that Saudi Arabia is pursuing, the potential that teachers have to contribute to this advance, and the dangers of ignoring their voices and experience, is clear.

All of the factors discussed in this chapter are inter-related, since the teacher's perceptions of leadership affect their willingness to be involved, and their professional development affects their skills and effectiveness in the classroom and the school. Effective teacher leadership can thus be considered as a kind of environmental factor, influenced by and impacting upon all elements of teaching as a profession and a practice. The desire to be a teacher leader accordingly appears to be influenced by the work environment that the individuals found

themselves in, or intended to choose. Such examples can inform Saudi Arabia's modernization of its education environment and system, and consequently facilitate attractive opportunities that enable EFL teacher leaders to exercise their talents and skills towards the overall benefit and growth of the quality of learning English in Saudi Arabia.

In the following chapter, Chapter 7, a summary of the research will be introduced and a proposed model for teacher leadership presented, followed by the implications of this approach and the current findings. The recommendations that come out of this thesis are given, along with some suggestions for further research.

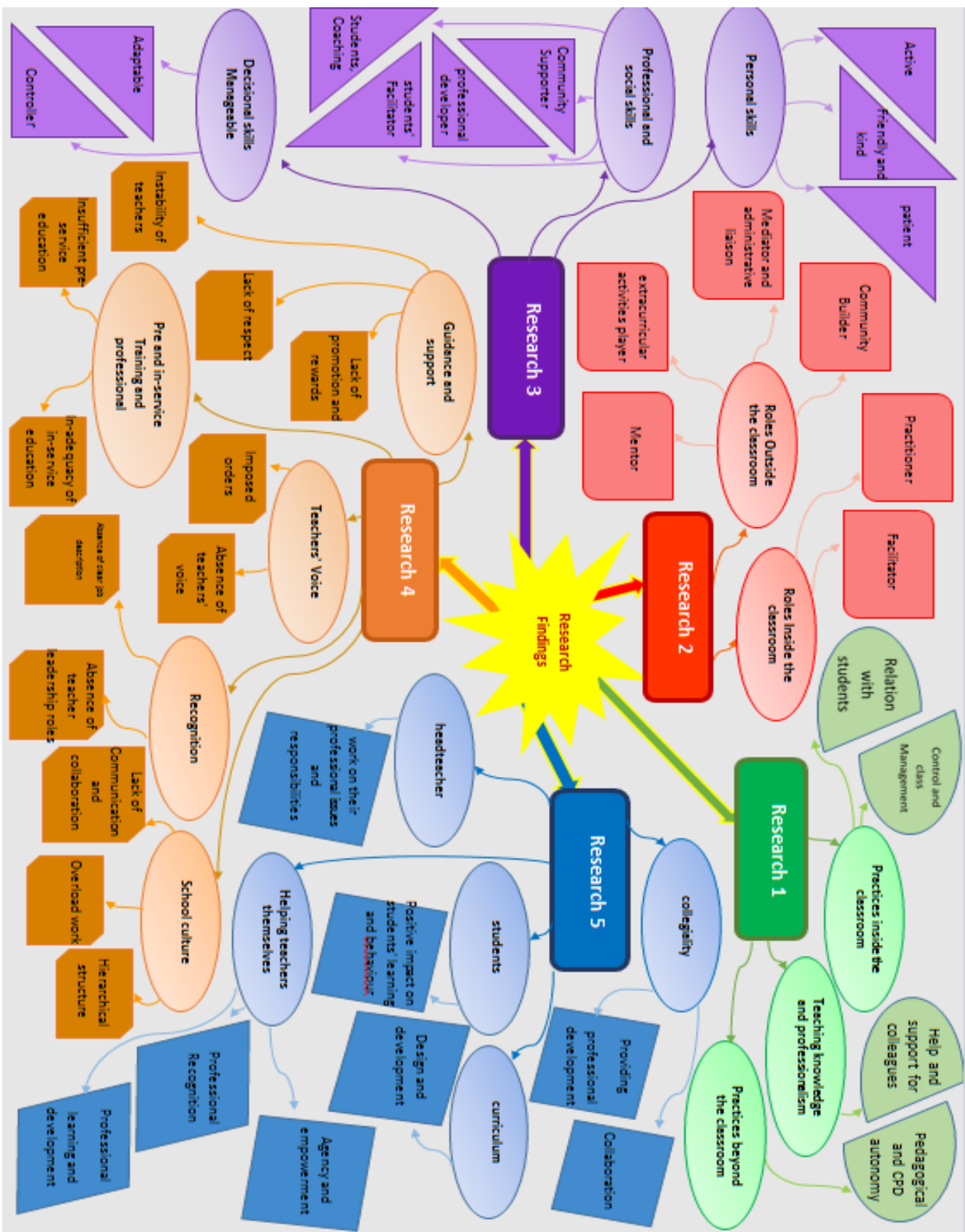
## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This concluding chapter begins with the main findings; it describes the contributions to knowledge and understanding of teacher leadership, both in the context of the research and potentially for global education contexts. The implications and recommendations of this study are outlined. The chapter considers the limitations of this research and makes some suggestions for areas of further investigation. Finally, there is a personal reflection on this thesis journey.

### 7.1 Summary of Main Findings and Discussion

This thesis aimed to explore the contexts of how Saudi English-language teachers perceive teacher leadership and how do they perceive themselves as teacher leaders. By interrogating their professional knowledge, practice and engagement in terms of teacher leadership in their schools, they have explored the desired roles of teacher leaders and the factors that would enable or prevent them from reaching these levels of professionalism to act through the capacity of their professional capital.

Figure 7 below gives a visualisation of the different elements that constitute the research findings, and their interrelations.



#### Figure 7: Research Findings

The findings shed light on the perceptions of teachers with regards to a definition of teacher leadership. Data revealed that teachers perceived teacher leadership from various angles, including through their teaching practices, their students' learning, their social collegiality and their professionalism. This highlighted the potential professional capital of the teachers in terms of their personal human capital, their collaborative social capital, and the combined decisional capital that drives the direction of the school.

The data revealed that the teachers perceive their continuous professional development as one of the key empowering factors for their professional capital. However, participants complained in a number of their responses about the lack of appropriate and effective opportunities for CPD that constitute their professional capital about teacher leadership. They lack pre-service training during their university study to construct their professional knowledge about teacher leadership methodologies, and they lack opportunities to apply and develop teacher leadership skills within the school culture and environment. Further, the CPD in the teachers' schools received from the Ministry of Education was regarded as top-down and inadequately tailored. This CPD also only relates to the planning aspects of their teaching practice, rather than the more holistic, professional aspects of teacher leadership and practice.

Participants also mentioned that there is no role recognition nor clear job description in which they can practise teacher leadership. Although they have the desire to take on those roles, they are given neither the time nor space to do this, so cannot develop in this area.

The teachers believe that increasing their professional agency to develop and practice teacher leadership roles would have several significant benefits for their students, themselves, headteachers, colleagues and the school community. This shows that they are motivated to become better teachers and improve their students' education. Participants identified several factors that would enable them to facilitate better learning through becoming better leaders. They expressed a need for greater autonomy in their classrooms, more opportunities for promotion and rewards, a sense of being listened to within the school, and more guidance and support to develop their teaching and learning practice. A lack of the enablers outlined above, along with an overload of work and the constant possibility of being transferred between schools were viewed as the primary barriers for developing better teacher leadership opportunities in schools.

## **7.2 Proposed Teacher Leadership Model**

In Chapter 3, professional capital theory supported the current research, in order to arrive at a new model called "Professional Teacher Leadership", illustrated in Figure 8, below. This new model can be used to guide professionals in terms of their knowledge, practice and engagement. Given opportunities to utilise their decisional, human and social capital, teachers are able to develop and activate their professional agency, professional autonomy, professional autonomy and professional knowledge.



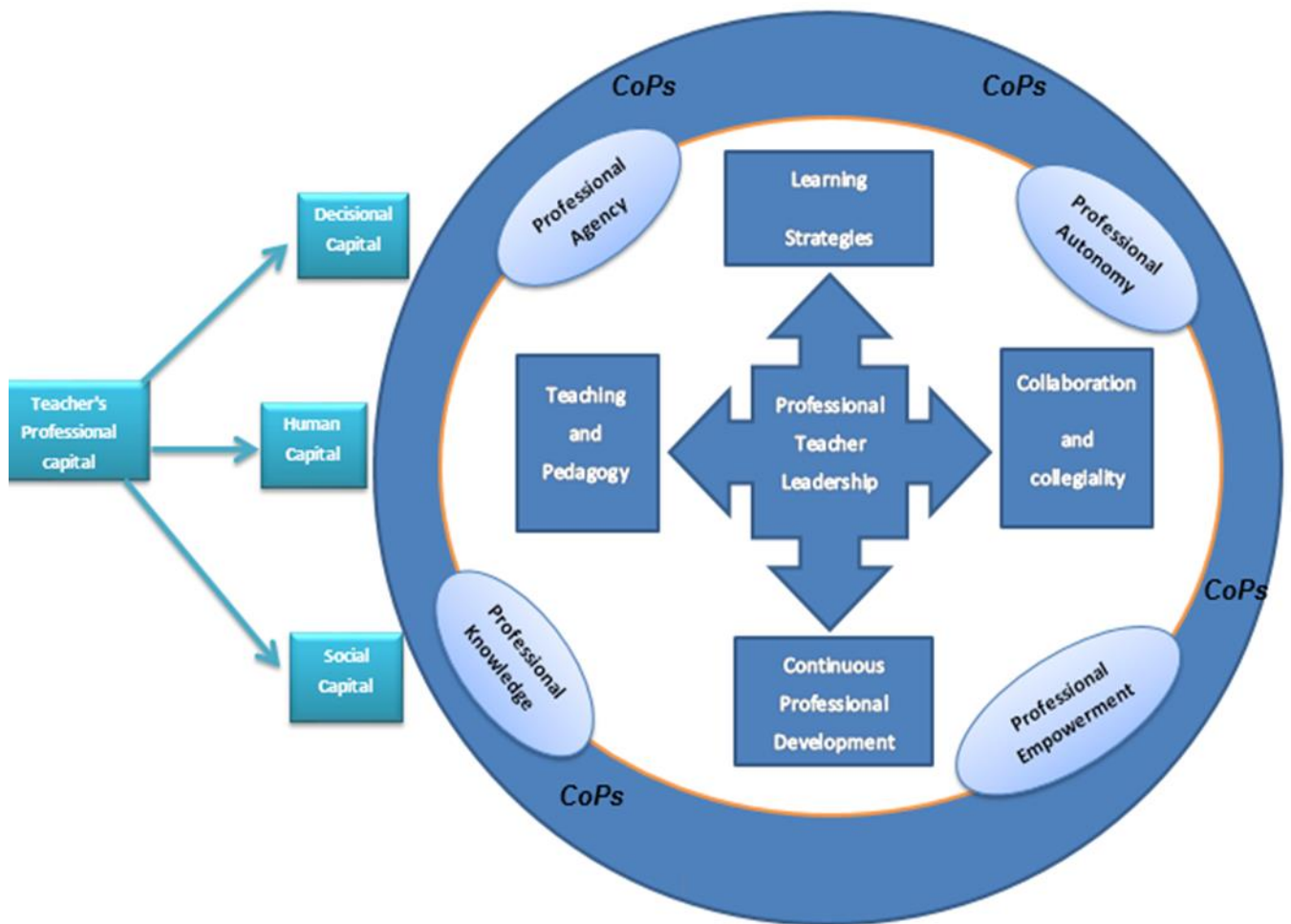


Figure 8: Model of "Professional Teacher Leadership"

This model views teachers in their teaching as individuals who possess a sufficient degree of educational competence to enable them to cope with the different tasks and skills required to perform effectively for their profession. This leads to enriched teaching and pedagogy, learning strategies, knowledge and skills of teachers and their colleagues and collaboration and collegiality. These positive results are achieved through communities of practice and aim to bring about positive outcomes primarily for students, but also for the whole institution and the wider context beyond this, in terms of building a robust collective professional leadership society for the future.

The model could be the start point of a new wave of teacher leadership, the fifth wave. This fifth wave (see 3.3 on waves one to four) can therefore be considered as valuing the intersection of teachers' skills and professional roles, so that not only their position and knowledge is included, but also their delivery in their professional practice and contribution to the school community, all of which may be considered to be associated with professional agency and leadership. The professional teacher leadership model seeks to unite teachers via their sense of moral purpose. It promotes relationship building through creating a collective leadership structure that encourages professional capital growth. Professional Knowledge creation increases as teachers work side by side, feeling valued and empowered. The model is underpinned by current theoretical directions in teacher leadership, which have been adapted in response to the findings of this research and the perceived needs in the context of TESOL teacher leaders and their school environments in Saudi Arabia.

The model can be referred to when assigning teacher leadership roles, planning present and future objectives, and setting up specific leadership projects or tasks. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, this produces increased moral purpose, knowledge creation, better relationship building and improved teaching and learning outcomes, specifically within the KSA context. If such a level of professionalization is to reach teachers in Saudi Arabia, then clearly a change of leadership culture is required in teacher education and educational settings in Saudi Arabia. However, it would appear that the current educational leadership and the accountability model of the centralized policy militate against the building up of the professional capital and potential that teachers have to maximize their professional engagement in the different school activities.

### 7.3 Recommendations

Drawing on the data presented and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the following section presents a number of recommendations in connection with theory, areas of professional knowledge, practice and engagement, and the development of educational policy about teacher leadership in the context of KSA.

Having reviewed the literature about the construct of teacher leadership and its developmental stages in regards to the necessary skills and roles of teacher leaders, Chapter 3 sought to define a new conceptual framework that would treat teacher's professionalism as the centre-point of teacher leadership. This conceptual framework includes areas of empowerment, agency, autonomy, teaching, learning and professionalism. In response to this conceptual framework, the underpinning theoretical framework and after having presented and discussed the findings, I propose the development of a model, called Professional Teacher Leadership (see Figure 8). The basis and benefits of this model have been discussed and demonstrated through the work in the previous section. I propose that this framework is referred to by all stakeholders as a strategy to envision teacher leadership roles for the future. The model recasts teachers as empowered agents of change with great resourcefulness of professional capital, individuals in a human sense and part of a community in a social collective sense. Although this framework is aimed specifically at TESOL, it may well have implications for teachers of other subjects and similar contexts if issues of transferability adhered in the current research (Chapter 4, data quality assurance, section 4.6) considered carefully, as the recommendations and suggestions presented here could not be just limited to the research context. The following sub-sections outlines first recommendation for teachers, followed by recommendations for policy makers in MoE and universities, and educational leadership teams in schools.

### 7.3.1 Recommendations for teachers

The analysis in Chapter 5, evidenced by literature in Chapter 2, was able to show that teachers' professional capital is underutilised in the KSA education system, because teachers are not treated with sufficient professionalism, or encouraged to attain it. Teachers expressed frustration at their inability to share their decisional capital, develop their social capital, or to acquire more human capital.

When considering the kind of roles that teachers could take on, it is important to offer a useful strategy for the different parts of the relevant structures, in this case educational establishments, that are founded of human relationships and functions. For teachers, it helps to consider that teacher leadership can be an activity both inside the classroom and within the school community. The responses in the research mirrored this, as the teachers shared a common identity in the role of the subject delivering teaching, and the objective of offering better education for KSA students. Their feedback offered useful insights into how the availability of the right systems and equipment, role definitions, CoPs, training and rules of behaviour can enable or disable teacher leadership practice.

Similarly, teachers feel neglected inside their schools, being given only classes to teach. Teachers should be encouraged to maximise their professional practice through the professional teacher leadership by working with headteachers and other stakeholders in the school development process. The MoE could facilitate this by directing schools to include teachers on the school councils.

Therefore, it is essential to for teachers to view themselves in their teaching as individuals who possess a sufficient degree of professional knowledge and agency competence to enable them to cope with the different tasks and skills required to perform effectively for their profession. Teaching can be seen as a co-operative

multi-dimensional profession that helps in shaping the success of students, teachers' collegiality and the school culture (Humphreys, 2010).

Additionally, when teachers' personal beliefs, understanding of the context and pedagogical knowledge are combined within the discourse of teacher development – and when this is legitimised by MoE listening to teachers' voices and showing leadership to encourage their development and professional teacher leadership – powerful changes can be enacted. However, teachers need to actively choose to invest in their professional autonomy and agency so that their professionalism is negotiated by themselves (reflexive positioning) as well as others (interactive positioning) (Palenko, 2000). This will build up their professional capital in ways that support them in leadership roles and encourage the sharing of responsibilities by schools and the MoE.

### **7.3.2 Recommendations for policy makers in MoE and universities**

Since the participants repeatedly mentioned the inadequacy of current pre-service training, there is a strong argument that the MoE should ensure that universities introduce teacher leadership theory and to trainee teachers in all subjects. The university classroom would be an environment where theories of teacher leadership are considered and discussed, rather than just subject knowledge. Reflecting the benefits of collegiality argued for in the findings, it is recommended that student teachers of all different subject specialisms mix in the same classes, and be expected to consider more than one approach to teaching and leadership.

As a simple example of how teachers are well-placed to offer their expertise to the MoE, the current participants highlighted the lack of skills training in preparatory programmes. The MoE could address this by providing teachers with knowledge and experience of teacher leadership skills, and issues that may need to be

addressed, in their preparatory year of teaching. This will construct solid foundations for their professional learning experience. Also, given the importance of continual professional development that has been identified, the MoE should provide access to training programmes that develop the skills of teacher leaders, not only their subject knowledge or organisational skills.

This means both an increased understanding of teacher leadership, and training in the specific skills of leadership, several of which were identified in both this research and previous studies. Teacher training introduced by universities should reflect the different leadership positions, to prepare future teachers for the anticipated professional teacher leadership roles when they graduate and begin their teaching in public schools.

Within teaching practice, the MoE should instruct schools to utilise the professional capital of all their teachers. This would be seen in a policy that recognises that teaching is technically difficult, and that teachers should be respected for their experience, and have their voices listened to. Acknowledging teacher's professional capital is made easier through the framework of professional teacher leadership, and adopting this model would allow the MoE to ensure that schools set aside time for all teachers to meet and discuss their knowledge and experience of best practice. Through the Professional Teacher Leadership model, teachers are empowered to acquire more professional knowledge of their own accord, become self-motivated teachers by perceiving themselves as professional leaders, and can be enabled as agents for acquiring their professional knowledge. Both teachers as individuals and the community of learning can benefit from this model, since, as the findings showed, when teacher leaders develop themselves, they also develop their colleagues and improve the school environment.

As a further step, the MoE should establish a culture of collaboration within schools and beyond that can capitalize on teachers' strengths and expertise. This would involve cooperation at all levels, including the standing of teachers in schools, how training is delivered, and the design of curricula. Beyond this, organisations involved in education design and delivery, on a national and regional level need to work more closely together to support teachers and define leadership roles. These include MoE, Tatweer, educational directorates, universities and the Public Education Evaluation Commission (PEEC).

It would be beneficial to establish a national organisation responsible for teaching as a professional career, setting professional criteria for teachers, their roles and training, as well as their professional rights and responsibilities. This will increase the standing of teachers social and professionally, and positively impact on their financial and non-financial rewards, making teaching a more attractive career choice. The proposed model "Professional Teacher Leadership" could be the underpinning conceptual framework of the current and future reforms and initiatives in the area of teachers' empowerment and their professional practice. By maximising the professional capital teachers have, we can tap the professional agency and autonomy to act as teacher leaders in their schools and beyond to develop a school culture of collective capacity and CoPs.

In fact, the school leadership and the current supervision practices that the MoE currently uses has been criticised as being top-down, ineffective and demoralising. Instead, a model that accounted for teacher's professional capital would provide opportunities for self-evaluation, alongside which the teacher can request to attend additional teacher leadership training events or to engage in further academic learning in this field.

It cannot be denied that the authorities surrounding teachers have a very significant role to play in leading and supporting teachers in the quest for more teacher leadership. Taking into account the strong evidence provided by previous research, this thesis argues that the system should set the tone for change and act as a role model in demonstrating professional engagement and empowerment of teacher leaders. In addition, the system needs to embrace the concept of teacher leadership, and advocate it in schools. Relevant policy needs to be established and resources should be provided.

All of these reforms would feed into what was clear from both this research and previous studies – that teacher leadership can lead to mutual benefits for teachers, headteachers, and students, both in the present and future of Saudi Arabia. This indicates that teacher leadership in the TESOL profession in Saudi Arabia should be included among the educational reforms under consideration. Given the significant role that English will play in the future of Saudi Arabia and the globalized world in which the country operates, strong leadership in TESOL teaching has never been more important. The hope is for reforms in the 2030 Saudi Vision to focus particularly upon the idea of teacher leadership as a professional activity, thus enabling the individual teacher to become an active and integrated member of a larger, evolving community, within and outside the school. This would involve empowering the individual in a way that working in isolation as a powerless person in a government corporation does not. Within this vision of the future, teachers in Saudi Arabia can become agents of change within the educational enterprise.

At in-service training level, the MoE should expect schools to include other teachers in the training needs of new teachers, as was called for by several of the



participants in this study, so that experience can be respected and shared. By allocating new, mid-level teacher leadership roles, schools can empower their longer-term staff to offer mentoring and support to their newer teachers. This will build autonomy and collegiality.

In order to facilitate these opportunities, the MoE should review the workload of teachers. Many participants reported that they spent so many hours teaching that they did not have time to undertake training or involve themselves in the school community. There should be space and time to develop teachers' professional capital and for them to take on leadership roles and responsibilities. Teachers are demonstratively willing to act as teacher leaders, so opportunities should be developed to incorporate their professional capital as professional agents of change. The MoE should therefore offer more teacher leadership roles, which should cover the professional pedagogical roles that relate to teaching practice, students' learning and teachers' CPD. Teacher leadership roles should have a clear list of responsibilities so that the division of labour is understood, since participants in this research complained that often their roles were under-defined. However, as roles evolve, there should be in-built flexibility to amend these descriptions as appropriate.

The MoE should simultaneously incentivise teachers to take on leadership roles. These could include a salary increase for those who work as teacher leaders, ranking them according to their levels of responsibility, and giving them recognition in national award ceremonies. Many of the participants said that they felt underappreciated for extra work they took on, since promotions were solely linked to years of service, so rewards for leaders would improve morale.

The MoE should listen to the voices of their teaching workforce, as a collective and as a group of individuals. They should cultivate a sense of mutual respect by involving teachers in the curriculum, exam design and policy-making processes. Teachers should be given a safe environment in which to express their opinions and engage in free and open discussion with ministry policy-makers. Often, the participants said, the curriculum was imposed or altered without discussion, and this was felt to be detrimental to both teacher morale and the progress of students, as the material could not be tailored to individual or local needs.

Dialogue at all levels is central to achieving the professionalism and reforms desired, and the MoE should give teachers real trust and respect to create opportunities for dialogue between teacher groups, headteachers and the Ministry. Headteachers play an integral part in cultivating a culture of professional practice and engagement, where teachers can obtain the support, collaboration, communication and recognition required to tap into their professional capital, as identified by the study.

The MoE should revise their policies for school management and introduce communities of practice that shape the professional growth of teacher leaders. This will give teachers space to engage with their colleagues in a professional arena of discussion. The benefits of communities of practice have been demonstrated in Chapter 3, and reflect some of the calls for change made by the teachers interviewed.

Even beyond the school, there are opportunities for the MoE to improve current conditions, for example by revising their policies for job applications, teacher mobility, school transfers and new placements. They should give schools the autonomy to recruit their own teaching staff. This would reduce the number of

transfers between schools and encourage each academic centre to take responsibility for its teaching staff. By giving this new policy directive, the MoE would improve the engagement of schools and their teachers by giving them agency. As was clear from the responses in this study, if teachers were placed in a school they had chosen for themselves, it would improve the stability of the school by decreasing transfers and increasing the potential engagement of the teaching staff.

Overall, while some efforts have been made towards educational policy reform, through Tatweer and other educational TESOL initiatives (as discussed in chapter 2), more work is still required to foster and develop teacher leadership in Saudi schools. Inclusion of teachers in school development could inspire hope in the teachers about educational reform and facilitate a more receptive audience for the voice of teachers, who require and can instigate change, if supported correctly. Their roles as teacher leaders would give support to the implementation of the new policies that come with the Saudi educational reforms, Tatweer, and the Saudi Vision 2030 reforms.

#### **7.4 Research Contributions to Knowledge**

This thesis has been designed to develop the existing discourse through specific themes, and to expand the discussion on for the teachers' professional practice and engagement in teacher leadership roles. Its particular focus has been the previously underexplored context of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement in Saudi Arabia. A number of contributions have emerged, through the combination of critical assessment of prior research and the findings made through the qualitative study.

Specifically, the thesis helps to fill a research gap by investigation Saudi English-language teachers' perspectives about teacher leadership. It conducted its research specifically with Saudi Arabian teachers who teach English as a Foreign Language, in order to ascertain how they perceive teacher leadership. This is the first time that anyone has looked at teacher leadership in this context within KSA, and has specific insights for the context of EFL teaching.

The design of the study also introduced a new research method for this field, since in the existing literature for this field there are no examples of sequentially staged qualitative methods. This study conducted one qualitative stage of research and then analysed the results to inform the next two qualitative stages. This was repeated to guide the final stage of research. This model has contributed to the thesis by triangulating the data from different perspectives. It also invites the researcher to consider how opinions are expressed differently in the context of being among peers, face to face with another person, or in private on paper. The study, operating under an interpretivist paradigm, avoided the kind of imposed method that the teachers have criticised in their discussions of teacher leadership in their context. By listening to their responses at each stage to guide the research, it has enabled Saudi English-Language Teachers to have their voices heard, and to construct a new, meaningful definition of teacher leadership.

The theory of teacher leadership employed is a novel approach underpinned by Professional Capital. This model underpinned the research and shaped a theoretical framework for methodological and data discussions. In using this theoretical framework, a new framework has emerged, based on the researcher's understanding of the previous 'waves' of teacher leadership, and leading to a new model of teacher leadership. The model used, 'Professional Pedagogical Teacher

Leadership', was positioned as a fifth wave of teacher leadership. This study provides an example of this fifth wave in action, as well as offering a definition that other studies may find useful or thought-provoking. Part of the benefit of this new approach is that it makes connections between professional capital theory and the existing academic literature about teacher leadership. Thus the thesis contributes directly to the discourse by showing how professional capital theory developed in response to the limitations of earlier definitions of teacher leadership, which were either too limiting or could not be effectively applied to modern teaching contexts. It also shows how aspects of teacher leadership theory from previous waves can effectively be incorporated into this new model. By connecting teacher leadership to professional capital theory, it can be seen that teacher leadership is not a matter of formal positions. Rather, it is the professional aspects that can empower teachers to be agents and develop their human, social and decisional capital. This contribution to knowledge is projected as a means to convince policymakers that teacher leadership can develop through four main channels: moral purpose, teaching and learning, relationship building, and knowledge creation.

As it is sponsored by the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London, this thesis will be sent to each library and to the King Fahad National Library in Riyadh, and the Ministry of Higher Education, where authorities and decision makers can access this new information. The research thereby gives a potentially significant voice to the professional teachers who are willing to take on teacher leadership roles in their schools. The research revealed important findings from teachers as potential professional change agents, which will be communicated to policy makers in the MoE. I hope that the research findings and implications will help teachers of English language to see how effectively their roles in teacher leadership could enhance their teaching practices, help their colleagues' professionalism, their

students' learning and achievements, and school development in general. It is also hoped that the communicative, collaborative and reflective elements and practices embedded within TESOL practice will encourage teachers to take ownership of the model and allow it to flourish.

Besides this direct effect on the Saudi context, the study's contribution may also reach out to and benefit the wider field of education, and TESOL practitioners in similar contexts globally. As well as the participants here acting as examples of teachers speaking about their leadership needs and frustrations, the knowledge-wide contribution of bringing the literature of teacher leadership and professional capital together provides a new outlook and a simplified model to unite the two frameworks. By proposing a new, integrated model of Professional Pedagogical Teacher Leadership, a fifth wave of leadership development is now open for academic discussion. It provides a new way to consider the complexities of teacher leadership and a practicable solution to teachers who do not currently feel empowered as agents.

## **7.5 Limitations of the Study**

A researcher should be aware about the different limitations and constraints during the research process. In this current research there were several factors that limited the potential for a thorough, balanced investigation, which the researcher anticipated and discussed them below.

The first limitation relates to the data collection stage, in which the researcher was unable to conduct interviews with females. In KSA, where education is split into single-sex schools, it was difficult to communicate with female teaching staff through one-to-one interviews and the focus groups. Therefore, this study's research was conducted only with male participants, thus limiting the feedback

perspectives on a large scale to include female teachers. Additionally, although the research utilised in depth three qualitative data set to gather data about the experiences and perceptions of teacher leadership, the study did not observe TESOL teachers' actual practices inside and beyond their classrooms; as this was not within the scope of the current research. Therefore, I was unable to determine if their reported practices mirror their actual ones in their schools.

Secondly, the research for this thesis was carried out in only one of forty-three directorates in KSA. Although this directorate reflects the teaching in many other parts of the country, it cannot be stated that it represents a general view. Therefore, this study was limited and further research in other directorates needs to be conducted for a wider and more accurate view of education in KSA.

Thirdly, the use of only qualitative data in this study prevents the findings from being generalized. If quantitative data had been gathered as well, and a mixed method approach used, it may have helped to gain a general opinion of teacher leadership with greater accuracy, though at the cost of the rich and emergent kind of data gathered here.

Fourthly, research conducted for this thesis was in English, chosen by the participants as their preferred language in which to conduct the focus groups, interviews and the reflective essays. As can be seen in the quotations used in the previous chapters, I have attempted to preserve the language of the participants verbatim, using their authentic voices to provide a flavour of their desires and frustrations. However, on occasions where the meanings were not clear, an explanation or edit has been provided. This would probably have been unnecessary if the research had been conducted in Arabic, and some participants may have expressed themselves differently in their native tongue.

Fifthly, as noted in the preceding discussion, the responses given by the participants have tended to be general or abstract, rather than concrete or specific, when discussing teacher leadership. Having more actual examples of practice would have created a richer picture of teachers' practice and experience. And future studies could be designed to illicit more such responses, using a case study methodology. However, the lack of such responses is itself revealing, being an indicator that despite their willingness and professional capital the teachers have very limited opportunities to put their conceptions of teacher leadership into practice. As more such openings emerge, teacher may be able to give very different responses in future.

Finally, the practical aspects of conducting this research included demanding travel, time constraints, and depended on the availability of the selected teachers. In a more convenient research setting, it may have been possible to collect more data and spend more time on its analysis and presentation.

## **7.6 Suggestions for Further Research**

Although this study has focused on the perspectives of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia, it would have been beneficial to have been able to include the opinions of other officials who work in education and the MoE. Perspectives from teachers in other disciplines might also have deepened the understanding of what needs to change in regard to teacher leadership, and how best to apply these changes in the context of KSA. For example, this study has recorded and analysed the teachers' perspectives, but as yet there is no research available on the perspectives of the headteachers and policy makers within the MoE in KSA. Additional research gathered from these other agents of potential change in teacher leadership would give a broader picture of the issues, practices and



attitudes that need to be addressed. The impact of teacher leadership from the students' perspectives ought also to be explored, to understand the impact of teacher leadership on the students' learning and achieving in ways not easily measured through testing or using observation to explore the professional practice of teacher leaders. Similarly, the restriction in this study of only interviewing male teachers could be rectified by further work that included the views of female teachers, who may experience teacher leadership in different ways.

It is also important to recognise that this research studied the perspectives of teachers rather than their attitudes and their actual practices. This exploratory study concentrated on qualitative data collection methods, which had several advantages in terms of design and the richness of the results produced. However, utilising quantitative methods in further research, a different viewpoint could be obtained, specifically by including the opinions of many more individuals and being able to track trends in the data. The research data could be more legitimately generalised within and beyond the context of EFL teachers in KSA.

This study has been conducted in one of the forty-three educational directorates in KSA. These other directorates need to be researched to confirm the representativeness of the study's findings. It would be similarly beneficial for future research to conduct comparative studies with other countries within the Arab World and beyond. Policy changes to education involve significant political decisions that other countries have tried and tested. It would help KSA to be better informed about what works in a particular social context, and how best to implement it.

Finally, by reviewing the literature there seems to be a few empirical studies which explores qualitatively or examines quantitatively the link between teacher

leadership roles practice and the benefits to the different stakeholders of education in the school and beyond. In addition, few have gathered responses of officials and teachers' views about the solutions of the different barriers of teacher leadership professional practice. Therefore, in-depth research and empirical scientific studies need to be undertaken to give policy-makers in education insightful research-based data locally in the context of the current research and globally.

## **7.7 Personal Reflection on the Thesis Journey**

As an EFL teacher in KSA myself, this thesis brought to the surface many issues of teacher leadership that affected my early stages of my professional teaching career. Working as a teacher, then headteacher, then head of EFL supervision in one directorate of KSA, and the Manager of Teachers' non-academic affairs, I witnessed the frustrations of teachers and a lack of engagement in teaching leadership first-hand.

The KSA Ministry of Education sponsored me to study for this PhD in the area of TESOL in 2010. Over the course of my research in the EdD at Exeter University, issues of teachers' professionalism, voice, marginalization and teacher leadership inspired me to study this area in more depth. This thesis proved challenging for me initially, because there is a paucity of research in the area of teacher leadership within the context of KSA. Furthermore, the culture of research in the UK was quite challenging; it is a student-centred learning environment which is not something that I had experienced before. This expectation to explore research in an autonomous way, coupled with the fact that English is not my first language, made the start of my research journey very difficult. Overcoming these obstacles has, however, helped to shape my professional identity as a teacher, and to consider

the need for greater autonomy and agency for teachers as leaders in KSA. Furthermore, my experiences as a school governor in one of Exeter's schools, and having started two discussion groups, has enabled me to see that more open discussion and dialogue between teachers, teacher leaders, policy-makers and other stakeholders has many benefits for an education system. Specifically, it empowers teachers which, in turn, can enlighten them to the importance of such dialogue, and then enable them to apply these insights with their students.

The conceptual frameworks from previous studies have shaped my understanding of the concepts and theories that relate to the domains, roles and waves of teacher leadership, in different educational contexts and specifically in KSA. This has led to the social activity perspective, which helped me to build the model of a fifth wave of teacher leadership, professional pedagogical teacher leadership.

My engagement with the science of research – being objective, operating within the research ethics code, the methodology and theory, analysing and evaluating data – has shaped my identity as a researcher. It has also benefitted me by informing my own teaching practice and guiding my decision-making processes to be systematic and to work within specific criteria and codes of practice.

Looking ahead, I will continue to explore new research in teacher leadership and to widen my professional knowledge of other aspects of TESOL. I will develop my professional understanding of pedagogical practices in order help me improve the professional engagement of teachers in leadership roles in KSA. The understanding of the research topic has constructed a robust perception of myself as a professional teacher and researcher in the fields of TESOL and education.

# Appendix A: Example Questions for Focus Group

## Focus Group Discussion Plan

Concept of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership domains

Teacher leader skills

Teacher leadership needs

Teacher leadership advantages for education: school, teachers, head teachers, leaning, school community

Supports for teacher leaders

Teacher leadership challenges

Job Description

School Structure

Decision making

Communities of Practice

Teacher recruitment

Teacher Pre-service In-service Training

School Activities

Curriculum Design

Evaluation Policy

Professional Development

Appraisal and Promotion

## Appendix B: Sample Questions for Interviews

### Face to face individual semi-structure Interview schedule

1. How do teachers in intermediate and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia perceive themselves as leaders?
2. Do teachers want to take on roles of leaders in relation to teacher leadership? If so, why? If they do not want to, then why?
3. What types of teacher leadership practices are available in their context?
4. To what extent is leadership discussed and developed among teachers?
5. How might your role as a leader be developed?
6. What contribution might teachers make to the overall leadership and management of the school?
7. Are pre-service teacher education programmes providing English language teachers) with knowledge in the areas of teacher leadership?
8. Are in-service teacher education programs providing English language teachers with knowledge in the areas of teacher leadership?
9. What are the perceived impacts of teacher leadership on issues such as students' achievement, teacher's collegiality and school development?
10. What factors can enable teachers to practise teacher leadership in their profession?
11. What factors might disempower teachers from being teacher leaders in their profession?

## **Appendix C: Instructions for Reflective Essay**

### **Reflective Essay**

Write a reflective essay about your actual and preferred roles as a teacher leader and how this can build on your professional capacity with your students, colleagues, school community and your pedagogical and professional knowledge? Please mention the challenges that you faced?

## Appendix D: An Example from Focus Group

Hi first of all I want to thank every one of you for your interest to participate with me in my thesis and as a doctor of the students I have to do research and this research needs data and the data comes from the field of teaching. I am very proud to do my research in a leader directorate, which is my work context at the beginning of my teaching and also I am very proud that leader schools participate with me in my discussion and I am very sure that today's discussion will contribute positively to my thesis. As I told you that the research is about teacher leadership and how teachers of English perceive or understand this phenomenon or this phrase teacher leadership. How they see it, do they agree with this? Is this helpful to them, to their students, to their teachers, to their head teachers, to the school, to education, if it is important and helpful? Are there any barriers, any difficulties? If they are important? Are there any factors that can help to be a teacher leader in your profession as teaching? So, first off all let us discuss. I am a moderator, I am not the main speaker, we can speak in different directions, so let me begin now and say how do you perceive teacher leader? What is a teacher leader or what is teacher leadership?

A: First of all, I think teacher leader how control the class and how to contact with students.

B: Your way to make a relation with student, to make this student likes your teaching and subject, I think this leadership, on teacher leadership. so this is about the way teachers contact and relate to their students.

M: Does is it mean that the teacher must be the centre, the educational process inside the class. Teacher leadership or the main source that the teacher for the information and guidance and so on. Or I must relate with the students outside the class. This is a question that may be due to no more about teacher leadership.

Mj: I think the teacher thinks of how to begin the class and that finish within the time. Yes, how to begin the class about what the subject, how to begin the class, and give many students the time for speaking about the subjects.

S: have you studied this concept in your bachelor degree? Have you studied this concept I mean teacher leadership in your bachelor degree in your university?

M: I think it is one of the theories and I think this will help to teach English. We studied how to teach English.

R: No. No. only How to teach English?

A: Even those who studied education, diploma or education, for me for example I have not studied this before. before, talking about a long time ago, not now, I have no idea about the new, but we are talking about how to be leaded in class. We are

talking about some elements like the \_\_\_\_ [ 08.53], confidence and you have our subject in English and be excellent throughout.

Mj: How to control the class? Yes, so how to control the class? How secure in these students, psychology by the students

M: How to connect between the additional states and social, some of the students have problems, how to get the thin line between that.

S: Ahah, okay, so again from your discussion you are within teaching itself. Are there any domains outside teaching for teacher leaders?

A: I am talking about myself. I am not caring about this. You know we are following traditional teaching here. Go to class, write the words, read and then go get the home work. Headteachers and supervisors: He said please Mr. Abdullah, they do not know have any idea about English, please then how come, he said you know what did he say at the end of this discussion, if you want to go early to your home please, pass, I said it why not.

Saud: How the ministry of education can empower teacher to be teacher leaders? You know empower to be teacher leaders so if you are for example in the ministry level minister or anyone to make decision to empower teachers. So how to empower teachers to be teacher leaders to participate in different domains in teaching, to be leader and helping the school, helping the students, helping the community, helping each other.

A: Have the good materials. With materials. Training. Training. Get a new way about teaching, may be scholarship

A: This is one of the important thing to enable. I mean you have the teacher. Teaching English is it? Ministry being heard about your thoughts before.

Okay, being passive. You know passive? Yes, by the ministry being passive not listen to, does this affect you?

Saud: Ok, because I have done focus group in Adhum last week. I mean before 8 and 2 days ago I have met them again to make one to one interview and they mentioned freedom for teachers. We need space for teachers to work with. To yes, give me goals to teach and I choose the materials. Just give me the goals, the aims, and I am a teacher I can choose, I have a bachelor, I have a diploma in education, I can choose my method. I should not wait for teachers course book to come and say teach with this material. He is the same like me, I am a leader.

k: Yes, that is good. So this is freedom as a voice listen to materials and teaching equipment, are there any others.

A: The main thing in English I said before you have to as good subject materials in English have or know what is going on in English and improve yourself to be



leader. Improve yourself in your subject before then you know how to lead your students.

Saud: Ok, now, do each other if you as teachers either in the school or outside the school or even with English as English teachers with Arabic teachers or mathematics teacher or any other subject, whatever, do you treat each other as a leader so for example yes, I can ask Syed about this way, this method, we have time to discuss like this in one focus group. They do this in the schools.

M: There is a gap between other subject teachers. So there is a gap between subject teachers. What about the same, do you have? A lack of communication between the same.

A: The same, because of what? Because of time may be, because of more periods or the system does not allow you to do this. Speakers speak frankly. Does the system allow you to do this?

Yeah, but they have no time Especially in this. Finish your classes and then move, Run away. You know, you know before I met you. I was about to run away, Yeah, but he caught me. I am very lucky.

Thank you.

## Appendix E: An Example from the Interview

Saud: Based on our discussion in the Focus School I think before two months, we find as a group the teacher leaderships and practices of teacher leaderships the opportunities for teachers to practice teacher leaderships. So in your point of view how do you define the teacher leadership?

A: From my point of view teacher leadership is to be as a teacher responsible I mean you depend on yourself, in everything, so you feel that you can manage the class, manage the course, manage the marks and manage everything by yourself and finally evaluate yourself at the end.

Saud: So what are the things that you think are very important for you?

A: No, before I answer the question, for now I think I am the guidance for my students. I just guide them to do this and do not do this, everything if we talk about the marks, courses and even in workbook if you look never listens, they are writing what do they want from you to say. Say open your book, say a lot and lot of things, you know they give you another instruction, what I need to be a teacher leadership. I think first of all I need to have more freedom from the sides or aspects of marks, courses, curriculum, I do not mean the base because I do not have the knowledge about your curriculum for the students. I mean what I need and what I do not need I want to have more responsibility. You know I need more roles to be a leadership. For example, I want to make for myself and I think but I cannot do it. I think to do this, but I cannot you know the nature of so dedication is not able to do whatever.

To be free.

Saud: Yes of course. Okay, so do you think that if you as a teacher and for other teachers, do you think they want to act as teacher leaders in your classrooms, in your schools or teachers they are reluctant? You know reluctant, they are reluctant to take on teacher leader role?

H: Yes, between and between you know I will speak from the side from the aspect of my colleagues and the school. Some of them want to be a leadership you know I call them you are leaders you know they are leader and everything, but at the end there is something dragging them to the policy the system, you know the chairman and so and so you know you have you know do this, do not do this okay. You know as an example I am a teacher leadership when I can come to school today I will come, if I cannot come, I would not come. Okay, I have what it would be my circumstances that allowed me to come to school. I am the leader I can lead myself. For example, so many teachers here, sorry I got to another point.

Saud: Okay, I mean those teachers who are excited to be teacher leaders as you said what are the roles for the teacher leaders that you are acting on or other

teachers acting now on in this school or another school from your experiences?  
What are the roles for the teacher leaders?

A: You mean for now and or for future. As I told you can manage your curriculum, you can manage your classes, divide them. You will be the responsible about as I told you everything. You can for example come or be absent as much as you can because at the end you are responsible about the curriculum and about the time or the period of time you have to finish the curriculum. The last thing you evaluate yourself. This is one important role evaluate yourself and it should be a supervisor not a supervisor you do this and you do not do this, not giving instructions you know just you know to see what you do if you give yourself, evaluate yourself by 100.

Saud: What about the teacher leader in relation with other teachers? In relation with the head teacher and relation with the students and relation with the school itself? Do you as a teacher leader have roles for these can say components of the school?

Am sorry, explain again?

As a teacher leader do you have roles with other teachers, with the head teacher, with the school, with the community? Or his main role is only inside the classroom?

H: No, you have roles outside, everyone outside. The teacher, you may be providing help for them, like now if I am you know expert teacher, for example, I have this theory applying teacher leadership and I am you know expert teacher, I can tell or I can direct or I can you know guide, will not guide, give instructions to the young teachers, not like now at the moment now I am expected to teach one year as a new teacher.

Saud: With point this one. So I mean from these rules, how might your role as a teacher be developed? How might the role of a teacher be developed?

H: Might be developed you know I think by our policy and our system it should be changed for the best, you know not be weak, change for the best. I think we have to you know our society should know about teacher leadership and I think this information, this background, will be in our society will be nor clear enough in our society after 5 to 10 years from using teacher leadership. What I think if we say this year I am teacher leadership okay and they have all these things, all the society still you know some parents still in their minds, ok if this teacher is not pass my students, pass my kids I will go to his chairman and I will complain. You know this idea is in our society and you know it, but if I am a teacher leadership he cannot, he will respect me before he goes to the chairmen for example to complain me.

This is the recognition of teacher leadership by the society and how this will impact positively on the teachers and the school itself.

Saud: Okay now, from your point of view and from your experience, I mean either with you I mean bachelor degree or with the diploma that you have got later on, do you think that those provide you with some programs, some can say subjects that give you knowledge about a teacher leadership and a teacher leader?

H: No, we did not have, I studied the methods of teaching, but without teaching leadership, something given in our universities, they do not, provided I think you know this. We do not have it.

What about now you are in the surface of teaching can say surface teaching, you are in the surface now, they call it in surface training, do they provide again teacher leadership issues in the training not all.

Saud: Do you think training can develop teacher leadership with teachers if their trainings, for example sections or department provide you with what is teacher leadership? What are the policies for it, what are the techniques? How to be a leader, how to be respected? Do you think these are important?

H: Yes, I think it is important. when you say how to empower. We have to take courses about, we have to train how to be a leadership, we have to take the most important time] we have to take time before we apply it. We have to train you know. Okay, you are a teacher leadership this year you have apply it and I do not know how to get it. We will go down for example if you come to me okay, you are the chairman okay, you are this year you are teacher leadership. Like for example community to maintain it. You are in teacher leadership okay now come courses for all teachers, some of them they do not apply them. It is not well prepared and teachers are not involved in it. Again, they are just saying this is teacher leadership. So from your point that means training is important, but it should be excellent training for teachers and all the benefit from these things.

I think first of all you have to for example, in universities we studied teaching methods for example they have to teach us teacher leadership before they apply it in the school. I think the beginning it should be from the universities to be from diploma for example, to be a course teaching what you call teacher leadership.

Saud: What factors can enable teachers to be teacher leaders?

A: I can, you know first of all as we said society recognition, freedom as we said, and study at the university about teacher leadership. I think the last thing I think policies and systems should be going with teacher leadership.

Saud: So other side of the question? What factors that can disempower teachers not to be teacher leader?

A: No, No. Not at all, oh my God. And this will affect teachers? Yes, I know if I make notes from books, they will not have heard it, they will you know reply it. Some teachers I think send some feedback about no one gets reply it. A group of experts make, but we are not better than them.

## Appendix F: An Example Reflective Essay

My Teacher leadership roles inside the class, school area and outside school with my society. Inside the classroom I have the power to create new ideas to help my student. It's giving me self-confident. Ability to solve my class's problems whatever the problem with my students, equipment's, curriculum and etc. I can also be going to development case and be able to think deeply of How can I improve my students' levels. I can put my own strategies, exams and exercises.

In the school area my voice is heard. My notes are important school manager respect my work and my word. I help my colleagues with their problem. we can share information with each other. For example, we meet to solve problems and putt strategies for English writing skill. So we are like health workers in hospitals specialist, technician and consultant. New teachers are listening to my advices because I'm the expert teacher. My notes are effect on curriculum, adding, deleting or editing. My roles with learners are very big. Motivate them improve them and looking for what are they need to learn? I'm teacher leader. So I represent my school to my community sharing vision and goals of school. Community is the complement of success. With teacher leadership community support the educational process. Eventually, teacher leadership is a great chance to be " a real teacher ". Challenges I faced while imp acting as a leader are varied. First challenge is with the policy of governmental education. There is a huge deferent between teacher leadership theory and other theories our education based on. Teacher leadership should be responsible for every paper or information he gives to others, and this cause a problem to irresolute teachers.

# Appendix G: Certificate of Ethical Research Approval

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH  
DISSERTATION/THESIS



Graduate School of Education

## Certificate of ethical research approval

### DISSERTATION/THESIS

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

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Your name: Saud ALSALAH

Your student no: 600035127

Return address for this certificate: 1 SPRUCE CLOSE EX49JU

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD in TESOL

Project Supervisor(s):

Supervisor 1

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I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis ( to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:..........date: ..7-4-2014.....

*NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

## Certificate of ethical research approval DISSERTATION/THESIS

Your student no: 600035127

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**Title of your project:**

Intermediate and Secondary English Language Teachers' Perceptions and their Reported Practices of Teacher Leadership in Saudi Arabia

**Brief description of your research project:**

The aim of this study is to gain an in-depth insight into teachers' beliefs and reported practices of teacher leadership in intermediate and secondary public schools in Saudi Arabia, choosing Alleith Directorate to be the context of the research. I will investigate the roles of English language teachers and explore issues of teacher leadership in their schools that relate to their profession. This will be achieved by exploring the beliefs, the practices and policies that relate to teacher leadership by investigating the participants' personal beliefs and practices, and exploring both enabling and disempowering factors.

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

The participants are 20 male and female Saudi English language teachers from Alleith Educational Directorate. They work in intermediate and secondary public schools. These teachers will be chosen from different schools, since there might be one teacher in every school due to the school size of teachers. The schools will be chosen based on the criteria of their best practices in leadership according to the assessment of the educational directorate. English Language Teachers who have taught more than 5 years will be chosen from those schools based on their willingness to participate in the study.

**Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:**

- a) **informed consent**: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document.

Ethical issues will be considered carefully and the researcher will abide by the standards of BERA and Exeter University. For example, this current form will be the start of ensuring that ethics of the research will be considered during the different stages of the research. In addition, the educational directorate will be informed to get access to the teachers. The directorate will be informed about the research aims and the use of data and how the research will be carried out with the schools and teachers to be involved. The teachers will be informed about the purpose and the aims of the research, and they will be given a consent form which has the procedures of the research and its ethics in relation to them. There are no participants who require special needs involved in this study. There will be no children either.

- b) **anonymity and confidentiality**

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that no participants can be identified from names, data, contextual information or a combination of these when designing, analysing and publishing. Teachers' names are only revealed via the focus group discussions. Participants also will be assured about the ethical considerations I will consider during their participation in the study. For example, they will be given pseudonyms. In addition, participants will be also asked for permission to tape-record the

interview and will be free to withdraw at any point in a time. The informants will receive a consent letter describing the objectives and the procedures of the study in details. Aspects and issues that relate to their gender, religion and culture will be also be considered carefully.

**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

The data collection methods for this research are narrative essays, document analysis, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. I will arrange with the participants about the convenient time and place to meet to ensure their readiness for participation and contribution to the study. Qualitative data will be analysed thematically with the use of Nvivo Programme. This programme will be set on my laptop and PC to insure that data will not be seen by others, a password guaranteed. Participants will be informed that this data will be gathered and analysed specifically for the purposes of this research and will be kept confidential except for me (the researcher) and my supervisors.

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

Teachers' interviews will be recorded, and transcribed, then written and recorded material will be kept secure in my own office and locked there where only I will have access to them. In addition, hard copy data (e.g. signed consent forms, any other paper based data) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. The audio and video data will be transcribed and analysed at the earliest possible opportunity, and then deleted immediately from their devices.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

The consent form will be detailed enough to ensure them that they understand their rights during the conduct of the research. One of the factors that might be exceptional during the document analysis phase might be access to documents that school headteachers and the directors who are responsible might view as official and not for research purposes. However, I will clarify the aims of the research and its contribution to the field of education, teachers, schools, headteachers and students.

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

*N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor*

This project has been approved for the period: May 13 14 until: May 2015  
By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): ..... S.M. Riley ..... date: April 7th 2014

*N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

GSE unique approval reference: D.113/14/25

Signed: [Signature] ..... date: 24/4/14 .....  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee



# Appendix H: Participant Letter

## Participant Letter

Dear Teacher,

I would like to thank you for your highly appreciated acceptance to participate and contribute to this doctoral research on "Intermediate and Secondary English Language Teachers' Perceptions and their Reported Practices of Teacher Leadership in Saudi Arabia". The study aims at gaining an in-depth insight into teachers' beliefs and reported practices of teacher leadership in intermediate and secondary public schools in Saudi Arabia, choosing Alleith Directorate to be the context of the research. I will investigate the roles of English language teachers and explore issues of teacher leadership in your schools that relate to your profession.

Your participation will be during the data collection phase which will include: narrative essays, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. These methods will be used academically to achieve research objectives. You are free to withdraw at anytime and any stage and to withhold any answers to any question. To let you know, the data will be used only for this research and your privacy and confidentiality will be safe and pseudonyms will be used to ensure this.

Thanks again and feel free to contact me for any further enquiries.

The researcher

Saud Alsalahi  
Professional Doctorate Student  
TESOL pathway, College of Education  
Exeter University  
Email: [smaa203@ex.ac.uk](mailto:smaa203@ex.ac.uk)  
Phone: 00966555567293

# Appendix I: Participant's Consent Form



## GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Title of Research: **Intermediate and Secondary English Language Teachers' Perceptions and their Reported Practices of Teacher Leadership in Saudi Arabia**

### CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the research.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed. I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations. if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form and all information I give will be treated as confidential.

.....  
(Signature of participant )

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s):...00966555567293.....

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Saud Alsalahi, Email: ([smaa203@ex.ac.uk](mailto:smaa203@ex.ac.uk))

\* when research takes place in a school, the right to withdraw from the research does NOT usually mean that pupils or students may withdraw from lessons in which the research takes place

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Revised March 2013

# A consent form to apply the study in Alleith Educational Directorate

الرقم: ٢٥١٧٢٤-١٥  
التاريخ: ١٤/٩/٢٥١٤  
المنشورات:



المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
ادارة التربية والتعليم بمحافظة الليث  
ادارة التخطيط والتطوير

سعادة الملحق الثقافي في سفارة خادم الحرمين الشريفين في المملكة المتحدة

سلمه الله

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد

نفيدكم بأنه لا مانع لدينا من تطبيق دراسة مرحلتها الدكتوراه للطالب : سعود بن

موسى الصلاحي بعنوان :

***Saudi English Language Teachers` Perception of  
and Readiness for Teacher Leadership***

في مدارس المحافظة وتقديم التسهيلات اللازمة لذلك .

والله الموفق ،،،

مدير التربية والتعليم بمحافظة الليث  
١٤  
مرعي بن محمد البركاتي



ادارة التربية والتعليم بمحافظة الليث ٢٤-٧/٧٤٢١١-٧ فاكس ٧/٧٤٢١١٠٠٠

# Appendix J: Example of Nvivo Data Analysis

21/04/2015 13:14

## Analysis of Teacher Leadership

21/04/2015 13:14

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
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### Node

#### Nodes\\TL enabling and disempowering factors

##### Document

##### Internals / teacher's voice

No 0.1771 13

1 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:06

we received order from the manager, from supervisor, to do that thing actually we have curriculum and we must finish it. We cannot do anything from me. Actually, I cannot do more than things. So things are imposed on you. Yeah imposed.

2 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:07

You cannot do any teaching from your experience. You need to follow instruction form ministry.

Reports\\Coding Summary By Node Report

Page 40 of 81

21/04/2015 13:14

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
-----------	----------------	----------	-----------------------------	------------------	-------------------	-------------

3 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:09

we have rules, we have red line, we cannot do anything may be when that student wants help from me outside the class, I cannot because I do not have any roles to help him.

4 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:10

The ministry does not give us a role to be a teacher leader.

5 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:10

Because the ministry imposed to us, the ministry does not give us roles to do that thing. The ministry is imposed to us, curriculum, you must teach it and that is it. Like the change the curriculum, as you asked, that teacher does not have any voice to order from the ministry.

6 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:14

Actually, some teacher does not have motivation. Yeah..does not have motivation to develop herself, some teacher want to teach and after that [ 10:17] and that is it, does not give for our student [ ] exam, homework, just come to teach and and go out leave the school.

7 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:15

Because the ministry does not give him motivation like when your success, the ministry will give him bonus or promotion, the ministry is the reason for that

8 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:23

The good teacher and other who work out, does not work, they take the same salary okay. The ministry must give a bonus for the teacher who is success or achievement with the student. Second thing,

9 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:25

the teacher does not work in his city may be he is working far away from his family, he lives alone. So he is feeling boring. He is every week travel and back, I think this is most important thing making disable .

10 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:26

that the teacher must have Respect. The teacher must have respect yeah and then this time we did not have respect for the students.Because the ministry gave the students more power than teachers. They did not give you power the ministry.

11 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:27

No, they impose, give us order. Do these things, do not do that thing. Just we received order.

12 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:27

do the university give you topics about teacher leadership?  
No.  
Not at all

13 SAUD 19/03/2015 15:28

May be they do not trust teachers. They do not believe them?

### Internals\\ focus group

No 0.2511 20

1 SAUD 25/03/2015 09:28

Just think I try to ignore some cases INSULTING FROM THE SOCIETY, STUDENTS, where some difficulties from the society, from the subjects, or some students. I try to work hards with patience as effectively

2 SAUD 25/03/2015 09:31

: Sometimes it is difficult to go beyond the classroom because so my first thing is to focus on the benefits, some students do not have good background of their English so this another barrier so sometime a good one teacher need to execute it \_\_\_\_ [ ] there might be some difficulties that might prevent the teacher from going beyond their classrooms.

Aggregate	Classification	Coverage	Number Of Coding References	Reference Number	Coded By Initials	Modified On
				3	SAUD	25/03/2015 10:07
						teachers they have less freedom and space to practice their leadership and teaching. We are restricted and controlled.
				4	SAUD	25/03/2015 10:10
						No s there any job description for teacher leaders.
				5	SAUD	25/03/2015 10:11
						H: You know we have not to say, do not cross the lines and the boundaries ____ [ ] and to something that we need it
				6	SAUD	25/03/2015 10:11
						the school structure does affect teacher leadership
				7	SAUD	25/03/2015 10:12
						The school have the good facility that will raise to the students and studying ____ [ 22:42] but does not have like

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