

# Reinventing School: Teacher Leadership at the Heart of the School

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**Abstract :** This research explores teacher leadership as a necessary skill in modern education. First, the foundations of teacher leadership were addressed through three axes: the definition of the concept, the essential skills of the teacher leader, and the different leadership styles. Then, the impact of this leadership on students, particularly on their motivation and personal development, as well as on the school, particularly through the commitment of the teaching team and the evolution of educational programs, was analyzed. On a practical level, an observation grid was designed to assess leadership mastery among primary school teachers. The results show gaps in the application of this skill and a notable variation between teachers specializing in educational sciences (LEE) and other teachers. To address this, concrete proposals are put forward, such as the integration of this skill into teachers' professional skills frameworks, in order to give it a central place in the evaluation and supervision processes.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Teacher, Competence, Motivation, Innovation.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of contemporary societies, marked by globalization, the acceleration of technologies, the transformation of communication methods, and the diversification of learner profiles, is profoundly redefining the role and responsibilities of teachers. Long perceived as simple transmitters of knowledge, teachers are today called upon to become versatile actors, capable not only of guiding learning, but also of innovating, collaborating, managing projects, and actively contributing to the improvement of educational institutions. In this context, the concept of teacher leadership is emerging as an essential professional skill at the heart of modern educational reforms. Teacher leadership is not limited to a position of authority or direction; it is the ability to positively influence the educational community as a whole—colleagues, students, parents, and partners—to achieve common goals. This form of leadership is expressed through pedagogical commitment, a desire for innovation, cooperation among peers, and contribution to a school climate conducive to success. Thus, the teacher-leader is simultaneously an expert pedagogue, an active collaborator, a strategic visionary, and an agent of change. They act not alone, but in synergy with other school stakeholders, helping to establish a culture of shared leadership. The recognition of teacher leadership as a lever for educational transformation is now supported by numerous research studies, particularly in countries that have invested in the professional development of their teachers. This research shows that teacher leadership promotes consistency in teaching practices, improves student motivation, stimulates the commitment of

educational teams, and strengthens school autonomy. Yet, despite these positive findings, teacher leadership remains poorly structured, undervalued, and sometimes misunderstood in certain school cultures where decision-making power remains concentrated at the top of the hierarchy. This tension between the theoretical recognition of teacher leadership and its limitations in practical implementation calls for in-depth reflection. What are the theoretical foundations that support this concept?

How does leadership manifest itself in teachers' daily practices? What are its real effects on school dynamics and student success? And above all, what obstacles hinder its development, and what levers can be activated to better integrate it into professional practices? These are the questions that this research aims to answer. It aims to explore teacher leadership not as an individual attribute reserved for an elite, but as a collective and evolving professional skill, to be promoted at all levels of the education system. To do this, we will first analyze the theoretical frameworks that underpin teacher leadership, highlighting the most relevant models for the school context. Then, we will study the concrete ways in which this leadership is manifested, through examples of innovative practices, interprofessional collaboration, and institutional mobilization. Finally, we will examine the obstacles to its dissemination—whether cultural, organizational, or structural—and propose avenues of action to promote its appropriation. In short, this research aims to highlight the strategic importance of teacher leadership in the continuous improvement of education systems. It also aims to contribute to building a stronger, more collaborative

teaching profession that is better equipped to meet the challenges of 21st-century education. It is not just about giving teachers new responsibilities, but also about supporting them in developing a more active, influential, and recognized role in the transformation of educational practices.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study is part of a qualitative approach aimed at an in-depth analysis of the teaching practices. To do this, we opted for a field survey focused on direct observation of teaching situations. This approach allows us to capture teachers' behaviors, strategies, and interactions in their real-life context, which is essential for understanding the implementation of the targeted skill. In order to structure this observation and ensure a rigorous analysis, we designed a specific analysis grid. This grid is based on a guide intended for trainees, adapted and enhanced to meet the specific objectives of our study. It consists of four main criteria, each directly linked to the skill that we wish to evaluate. Each criterion includes several operational indicators, which serve as benchmarks for observing and coding teachers' practices systematically and objectively. The four criteria used are: Pedagogical vision and student motivation This criterion aims to assess the extent to which the teacher demonstrates a clear and coherent vision of their pedagogical objectives. This includes observing whether the teacher clearly communicates the aims of the sequence and whether their actions are geared towards stimulating student motivation. Motivation is a key factor influencing learner engagement and success. The indicators associated with this criterion relate to the explicit formulation of objectives, the use of motivating tools or materials, and the ability to create a climate conducive to student interest and participation. Classroom management This criterion concerns the organization of space, time management, and maintaining an environment conducive to learning. This involves observing the strategies implemented to prevent disruptive behavior, promote concentration, and ensure the flow of activities. Indicators include the management of transitions between activities, the way in which the teacher establishes and enforces rules of group life, as well as their ability to regulate interactions to maintain a calm atmosphere. Communication skills Effective communication is fundamental to the pedagogical relationship. This criterion analyzes the quality of exchanges between the teacher and students, both verbally and non-verbally. It involves observing the clarity and adaptation of speech, the relevance of instructions, as well as the ability to listen and respond to students' questions or needs. Indicators also assess the ability to use accessible language, vary methods of expression, and encourage student expression. Reinvestment and transfer of learning Finally, this criterion examines how the teacher promotes the mobilization and application of knowledge in new contexts. It involves observing the systems put in place to encourage the transfer of knowledge and skills, an essential element for lasting and meaningful learning. The indicators focus on the proposal of synthesis activities, the connection with concrete situations, as well as the support given to students so that they can reinvest what

they have learned. The analysis grid thus constructed served as the main tool for conducting field observations. The observed sessions were chosen to represent different teaching situations and various levels of education, in order to ensure a certain diversity in the data collected. During the observations, each criterion was evaluated in real time, by precisely noting the elements corresponding to the defined indicators. This method not only allows us to qualify the observed practices, but also to identify strengths and potential areas for improvement. It also offers a common and shared basis for comparing teachers' behaviors with each other or in different contexts. The use of this analysis grid guarantees a systematic approach, avoiding biases linked to an overly subjective or global observation. Furthermore, the precision of the indicators facilitates the transmission of results and their interpretation, particularly during the phases of feedback to teachers or when writing the conclusions of the study. In summary, the methodology adopted, centered on an observation grid built around four essential criteria — pedagogical vision and motivation, classroom management, communication skills, and reinvestment of learning — constitutes a solid and relevant framework for analyzing teaching practices and better understanding the implementation of the targeted skill.

**Target population:** The target population in this study is composed of teachers, in order to observe the diversity of teaching practices in relation to the skill studied. We observed four teachers, equally divided between men and women, which allows us to integrate a gender diversity dimension into our analysis. These teachers come from different backgrounds. Two of them have a degree in "Teaching and Education", a specialized training that specifically prepares for the teaching profession by combining pedagogical theory and practice. The other two teachers come from non-specialized backgrounds, having followed a different academic path before working in the teaching field. This diversity of profiles offers an interesting insight into professional practices, allowing us to examine possible differences linked to the type of initial training. The observation of these teachers with varied backgrounds enriches our analysis, highlighting the skills actually used in the classroom, regardless of the training received. Thus, the target population, balanced in terms of gender and composed of distinct training profiles, constitutes a relevant basis for analyzing the implementation of the criteria defined in our observation grid.

## III. RESULTS

The analysis of the observations made using the analysis grid made it possible to identify several major findings concerning the appropriation of leadership skills by primary school teachers. These results highlight both the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of pedagogical practices related to leadership, as well as the influence of initial training on this appropriation. Uneven mastery of the components of pedagogical leadership First of all, it is important to remember that the four criteria selected—pedagogical vision and student motivation, classroom management, communication skills, and

reinvestment of learning—correspond well to the essential components of pedagogical leadership as defined in the literature. These criteria reflect the key dimensions through which a teacher can exercise their leadership role in the classroom, mobilizing and guiding students toward academic success. However, analysis of the observations reveals that mastery of these components is very uneven among the teachers studied. Some aspects seem well established and integrated into daily practice, notably the maintenance of a caring climate within the classroom. Indeed, most of the teachers observed know how to create a safe, respectful, and calm environment, which constitutes a favorable basis for learning. Similarly, they demonstrate a certain responsiveness to unforeseen events, quickly adapting their classroom management to limit disruptions. Conversely, other essential dimensions of educational leadership are significantly less developed. For example, the clarity of the pedagogical vision often remains unclear or poorly explained to students. This lack of a clear vision limits students' ability to understand the objectives pursued and to fully take ownership of learning. Furthermore, encouraging active student participation is insufficient in the majority of cases. Few teachers succeed in generating genuine student engagement, thus favoring a passive role rather than an active and autonomous one. Finally, the link between learning and students' daily lives often remains tenuous or absent, which weakens the meaning and relevance of the knowledge taught. Predominance of transactional leadership Beyond.

From these observations, the analysis of leadership styles expressed in teaching practices reveals a clear trend: transactional leadership largely dominates. This leadership style is characterized by a focus on rule management, discipline, and task execution. Teachers often adopt a directive stance, centered on control and compliance, aimed primarily at maintaining order and ensuring the transmission of content. On the other hand, transformational leadership, recognized as particularly effective in the educational context, is rarely present in the observed practices. This style, which is based on inspiration, intrinsic motivation, student empowerment, and intellectual stimulation, is rarely mobilized. Few teachers manage to embody an inspiring vision, encourage creativity, or value student expression and participation. This deficiency limits the ability to create an environment conducive to student growth, accountability, and the development of transversal skills. Decisive influence of initial training Another major finding concerns the notable difference between teachers with a specialized degree in "Teaching and Education" (LEE) and those who have followed non-specialized courses. The former benefit from professional training that provides them with solid theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills in didactics, classroom management, differentiated pedagogy, and communication. This training allows them to adopt a more reflective and strategic stance, thus facilitating the coherent planning of their lessons and the establishment of a more dynamic pedagogical relationship with their students. As a result, these specialized teachers are generally better equipped to exercise relevant pedagogical leadership. They demonstrate a greater ability to clarify objectives, adjust

their practices according to student needs, and promote active participation and the transfer of learning. This stance reflects a deeper understanding of their role as educational leaders. Conversely, teachers with non-specialized courses—such as a degree in French or management—often have gaps in essential pedagogical skills. Their practice tends to remain more transmissive and less interactive, focused primarily on disciplinary content rather than.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight that the competence of pedagogical leadership is still partially appropriated by primary school teachers. Several significant disparities appear, mainly linked to the initial training and professional backgrounds of teachers. This situation raises fundamental questions about how training, professional support and practices in the field contribute to the development of this essential competence for educational success. An uneven and partial appropriation of pedagogical leadership One of the first observations is that certain fundamental aspects of pedagogical leadership remain poorly developed among a large number of teachers. Student motivation, clarity and communication of an explicit pedagogical vision are elements often insufficiently integrated into their daily practice. Yet these dimensions are at the heart of transformational leadership, which aims to inspire, mobilize and empower students. The absence or weakness of these practices reflects a posture mainly centered on lecture-based teaching, reactive and oriented towards the simple transmission of knowledge. This stance results in often procedural management and poor anticipation of students' real needs, limiting their initiative and active participation. This predominance of transactional leadership – based on discipline, control, and compliance with rules – clearly illustrates this tendency to prioritize short-term compliance and management at the expense of a long-term, proactive, and inspiring vision. This observation is worrying because it reduces the possibilities of creating a stimulating and inclusive learning environment, a *sine qua non* condition for fostering student engagement, confidence, and success. By limiting students' expression and participation, this stance can reinforce their passivity and restrict the development of essential transversal skills such as autonomy, critical thinking, and creativity. The fundamental role of specialized initial training The differences observed between teachers trained in the "Teaching and Education" (LEE) degree and those from non-specialized courses highlight the decisive impact of initial training on the acquisition of leadership skills. Specialist teachers benefit from a professional training course which integrates both knowledge solid theoretical and practical situations, including specific modules on classroom management, didactics, communication and child psychology. This training provides them with concrete tools to thoughtfully plan their lessons, adjust their practices according to students' needs, and create a climate conducive to learning. Their reflective and strategic stance demonstrates a better understanding of their role as pedagogical leaders, capable of inspiring and mobilizing students beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. This difference in skills highlights the need for a

specific initial training course to develop the transversal skills essential for exercising effective pedagogical leadership. It also confirms that non-specialized training does not sufficiently prepare teachers to meet contemporary classroom challenges, particularly in terms of human interaction, pedagogical differentiation, and the integration of learning into real-life contexts. The limits of initial training and the need for ongoing support However, it is important to note that even among teachers trained in LEE, mastery of the pedagogical leadership skill often remains incomplete. This clearly shows that initial training, although fundamental, cannot alone guarantee the development and maintenance of effective leadership adapted to the demands of the field. Teaching is a complex profession, which is continually evolving according to pedagogical innovations, student needs and institutional contexts. Leadership skills, in particular, must be consolidated through regular experiences, ongoing reflective work and sustained professional support. This underlines the need to integrate targeted continuing training programs, accessible to all teachers, regardless of their background or seniority. These programs must allow teachers to develop new skills, adjust their practices, share their experiences and appropriate innovative methods to exercise transformational leadership. Furthermore, continuing training must also promote the construction of a collective culture of leadership.

Climates”ISS4 Revisited\*

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