Introducing teacher leadership in Turkey

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Abstract

This paper reports on a 4 year programme of action research undertaken by the author. The project aimed to develop and evaluate a programme of support for teacher leadership in a district of Istanbul. The programme centred on a series of workshops that aimed to develop teachers' capacity to lead change in their schools to improve their teaching practice, school culture and student outcomes. The project was evaluated and the impact of the project on teachers, school culture, classroom practice and student outcomes as well as the challenges for developing shared leadership cultures in Turkish schools were rigorously documented. This paper argues for the cultivation of teacher leadership in Turkish schools as a reform strategy. It first provides an overview of the programme, documents the results of the evaluation process, and identifies the challenges of developing teacher leadership in Turkish schools. The paper also puts forward some suggestions and strategies for developing teacher leadership for school improvement.

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The Turkish educational system has been going through many educational reform initiatives since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The main purposes of these reforms are twofold. The first purpose is to modernise the educational system. The second purpose is to raise attainment levels. The 2009 PISA results revealed that the average 15-year-old in Turkey is 1 school year behind the average OECD counterpart in reading, maths and science skills (Ozenc and Arslanhan, 2009). In a survey, 70% of Turkish people have identified education as a 'very big problem' in the country (Grossman and Sands, 2008). It seems that there is a high need for reform in Turkey. In response, Turkey has undertaken some serious initiatives in the last decade including an 8-year programme of curriculum development and teacher education. The Ministry of Education depended on intensified efforts to offer professional development activities as the primary means to achieve allthese reforms. However, these reforms were limited in their effect to raise attainment, as shown by the PISA results.

There are severalissues with this professional development approach to reform. Firstly, instead of building teachers' capacity to lead and manage innovation, professional development activities were short-term, and technical-rational in nature. The Ministry treatsreforms as technical improvement or updating teachers' repertoire of methods. Secondly, the Ministry neglected the professional roles of teachers. For instance, the new curriculum required teachers to be more like a coach and co-learner in this process (MONE, 2005). However, the training focused on technical training and knowledge transmission rather than addressing teachers' professional roles. Thirdly, reforms lacked the support of teachers, who are responsible for the implementation of the reforms. The Ministry did not sufficiently consider the active role that teachers need to play in the change process (Robinson, 2009). Can (2007) looked at teachers' roles in Turkish schools, and found that teachers are rarely or never involved in lifelong learning, which suggests that they still maintain their classroom - related, traditional teacher roles rather than taking responsibility for implementing these reforms in their schools.This professional development approach neglected this aspect as well. This approach was further complicated by the centralist structure of the educational system. Turkey has the most highly centralised educational system of any OECD member state (Fretwell and Wheeler, 2001). Such a centralist structure dictates change through command-and-control and thereby diminishes teachers' agency and excludes teachers from reform initiatives (Fullan, 2001).Therefore, these reforms were limited in creating a long-lasting impact.

As an alternative to this kind of professional development approach to school reform, a team of international researchers led by David Frost of the University of Cambridge proposed a teacher leadership approach to school reform and launched the International Teacher Leadership programme in 2008. The principles of teacher leadership resonated with my idea of school improvement and seemed to offer a solution to reform issues in Turkey. I became a member of this group and I implemented a four-year teacher leadership programme in a district in Istanbul. I undertook a doctoral study which enabled me to evaluate the programme in action (Bolat, 2012).

Overview of the programme

The teacher leadership programme was part of the International Teacher Leadership initiative(ITL) co-ordinated by the Leadership for Learning group at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. 1000 teachers from around 150 schools from fifteen different countries participated in the project. [1] We all had one over-arching aim: to build forms of support for teacher leadership for school improvement appropriate to a range of different cultural and political settings and responsive to the particular challenges that arise in those settings. Materials, tools and techniques developed over many years were adapted and translated to enable the ITL partners to support teachers as leaders of processes of innovation within the context of the project (Frost, 2011).

As an ITL team member, I designed and implemented a teacher leadership programme with 35 teachers in six Turkish schools. I worked directly with these 35 teachers for one year. We held 16 workshops to enable teachers to exercise leadership. The programme was supported directly by the Governor of Maltepe District in Istanbul.

A theoretical perspective

This paper does not seek to give a detailed theoretical perspective for teacher leadership on which this programme was based. This is explored elsewhere (Frost, 2012). In summary, teacher leadership disrupts the view of leadership as based on position. Instead, it refers to

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[1] Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and the UK.

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 (Frost and Durrant, 2002). Our programme promotes such a view of teacher leadership and offers an intervention that enables teachers to adopt such a view. Below I describe the programme and how it has been structured to enable teachers to lead change.

A description of the teacher leadership programme

The teacher leadership programme is a particular school improvement strategy that aims to enable teachers to build their leadership capacity and lead change in their schools. It refers to the initiatives and development work projects in which teachers consult, collaborate and conduct enquiry in order to improve their classroom practice and influence colleagues towards improvement throughout the school (Frost *et al.*, 2000). Teachers explore their values, set out carefully planned strategies and devise an action plan that addresses their concerns regarding classroom practice and student learning. They are engaged in a development work project, which is a process of experimenting with practice, gathering evidence and collaborating with others.

The principles of teacher leadership in the Turkish project were achieved through nine2 hourworkshop sessions and one network event throughout the year. The programme also offered one network event. Throughout the year, teachers shared their work with each other, received critical feedback, and discussed issues with their colleagues.

The programme of sessions modelled a constructivist learning environment. It facilitated reflection, dialogue and co-operation amongst colleagues. The programme enabled teachers to experience an epistemological shift from viewing themselves as passive receivers of information to active constructers of knowledge (Taylor *et al.,*2011) in sharp contrast to a delivery model of training where teachers are seen as deficient or lacking in skills (Little, 2003).

Teachers were offered intensive and sustained support through frequent group sessions and one-to-one supervision over a long period of time. These sessions and supervisions offered time and opportunities to engage with colleagues to reflect upon their practices. Most

importantly, the programme enabled the teachers to take action based on their own needs and specific context rather than dictating an agenda for improvement. All these aspects of the sessions offered teachers a powerful learning experience and thus made the programme an effective school improvement strategy.

Methodology

My purpose was to foster teacher leadership in Turkish schools and contribute to a knowledge base through documenting this process. This commitment to practical outcomes as well as the contribution to a knowledge base characterised my study as 'action research'.I posed myself this question:

> How can I *develop* and *evaluate* a strategy for school improvement that rests on teachers' capacity to exercise leadership in order to make a difference to their professional culture, classroom practice and student learning in Turkey?

In addition I sought to examine the extent to which the programme has the potential to develop teachers' leadership capacity.

The research design required constant data collection and analysis through multiple sources throughout the year. The data were collected through semi-structured interview, unstructured observation, document analysis, questionnaires and fieldnotes. I conducted interviews with teachers, headteachers and students; observed sessions, network events and school settings through frequent visits; conducted two questionnaires with teachers; analysed teachers' diary and portfolios; and took notes in my research journal. Multiple sources of data with different participants enabled me to *monitor*, *develop* and *evaluate* the programme.

The contribution of the programme to teacher leadership capacity

The programme was constantly evaluated and the findings were fed into the programme to improve it during the course of implementation. It was also evaluated rigorously at the end to explore the impact of the programme. In this section, I discuss the findings of the evaluation.

The evaluation processes revealed that the programme made an impact on the capacity of teachers to lead change in their schools. Six main categories of impact in relation to leadership capacity emerged from the data analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1: Categories of impact on teacher leadership

Category	Sub-categories
Leadership capacity	Teachers' conception of leadership
	Teachers' approach to school improvement
	Collaboration capacity
	Awareness of values
	Self-efficacy
	Teachers' perception of professional roles

Leadership capacity

The programme enabled teachers to develop their capacity to lead to a great extent. Six sub-categories of impact in relation to teachers' leadership capacity emerged, discussed below.

Teachers' conception of leadership

The programme aimed to change teachers' conception of leadership from an authority-based notion to an influenced-based one. The impact questionnaire revealed that the programme had a considerable impact on 31 (88.57 %) teachers' conception of leadership.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My conception of leadership has changed.	0 % 0	2.8 % 1	8.6% 3	48.6 % 17	40% 14

However, their conceptions of leadership were not the same. Three different conceptions of leadership emerged from the data and this determined teachers' approach to leadership, collaboration and school improvement (see below). The first group of teachers (8 teachers, 22.85 %) defined leadership as 'taking responsibility for one's learning', the second group (16 teachers, 45.71 %) as 'influencing colleagues' and the third (11 teachers, 31.42 %) as 'shaping the whole school culture.' I labelled these three groups 'self-leadership', 'micro-level leadership' and 'macro-level leadership' respectively.

The 'self-leadership group' developed a notion of leadership as 'taking responsibility' for one's own development. These teachers chose to lead change mostly 'within' their own

classroom with little interest in leading 'beyond' their classrooms. For instance, one teacher said:

> *I am in this programme to make a difference to my students, not to other teachers.* (Pera, Teacher 1)

These teachers developed a strong sense of agency, which enabled them to initiate new endeavours in their classrooms. Some commentators may not categorise 'taking responsibility' as leadership, but I regard this as a significant development since developing agency is a precursor to exercising leadership. Leadership of others involves first being able to lead oneself (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009).

The 'micro-level leadership' group developed a notion of leadership as 'influencing colleagues.' Like the first group, they also developed a strong sense of agency, but went beyond that. They chose to lead both 'within' and 'beyond' their classrooms. They took responsibility for the development of their colleagues. However, these teachers were very selective as to which colleagues to influence. They chose to approach colleagues in their immediate network rather than mobilising the whole school community. For instance, one teacher said:

> *There are some teachers I do not even talk to or like. I have no interest in having a conversation with them, but I try to influence my friends in the department.* (Kent, Teacher 13)

The macro-level leadership group defined leadership as 'shaping the whole school culture.' They developed a strong sense of agency and tried to influence their colleagues in their immediate network, but they went beyond that. They tried to shape the whole school culture, by engaging the headteachers in their efforts and by trying to create organisational structures that would enable interaction and collaboration. For instance, in one school, teachers in the teacher leadership group engaged the whole staff in parent education and utilised headteacher and governor support effectively. These three different meanings of leadership could be placed on a continuum. Teachers first have a notion of leadership in which they take responsibility for their own learning (self-leadership) and extend it beyond their classrooms towards their close colleagues (micro-level leadership) and the whole school community (macro-level leadership). The programme aimed to promote a macro-level leadership conception for all the teachers, but not all teachers reached that level since conditions and factors were not supportive of their leadership in their schools.

Teachers' approaches to school improvement

These three groups enacted leadership differently and this affected the extent to which they exercised leadership. These three groups had different approaches to school improvement. The self-leadership group mostly adopted a professional development approach to school improvement (Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: A professional development approach
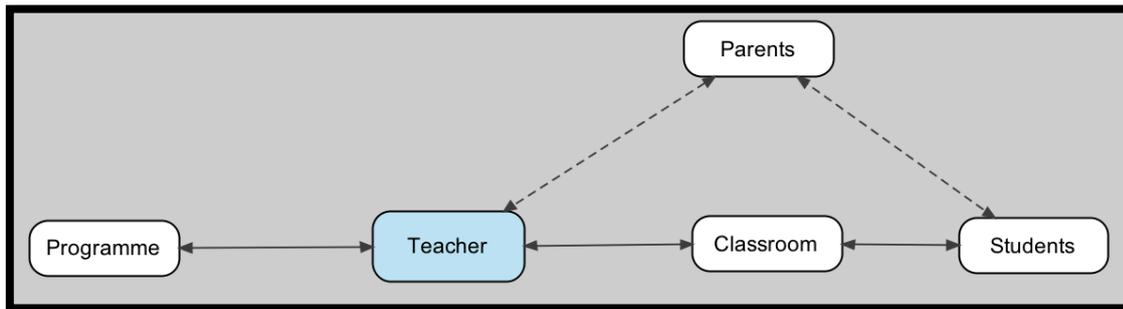
The dotted line indicates occasional interactions. The continuous line indicates direct interactions.

As can be seen in the figure above, these teachers focused only on their own classroom practice and students. They occasionally interacted with parents. They characterised it as a very strong form of professional development since they took responsibility for their own learning and became engaged in experimentation, inquiry, reflection or collaboration. They had little interest in leading 'beyond' their classrooms. For instance, one teacher said:

> *I do not think I need the support of the headteacher or my colleagues. I can easily improve my practice in my classroom without their help.All I need is my students.* (Pera, Teacher 1)

Although this approach was desirable and valuable in itself as a strong form of professional development, their approach was limited and was less likely to lead to school improvement, since it tends to be individualistic and small-scale, which leads to a lack of impact in the school as a whole (Frost, 2011).

The micro-level leadership group adopted *a restricted school improvement approach*. They went beyond the professional development approach and chose to lead both 'within' and 'beyond' their classrooms (see Figure 3). However, the group of teachers in the diagram chose to approach colleagues in their immediate network rather than the whole school community. They depended on their close relationships to influence them. The reason why I

labelled their approach as 'restricted' is that they did not involve the headteachers, although they did occasionally interact with them. Nor did they try to mobilise the whole school community, by creating organisational structures for collaboration or knowledge building.

**Figure 3: A restricted school improvement approach**
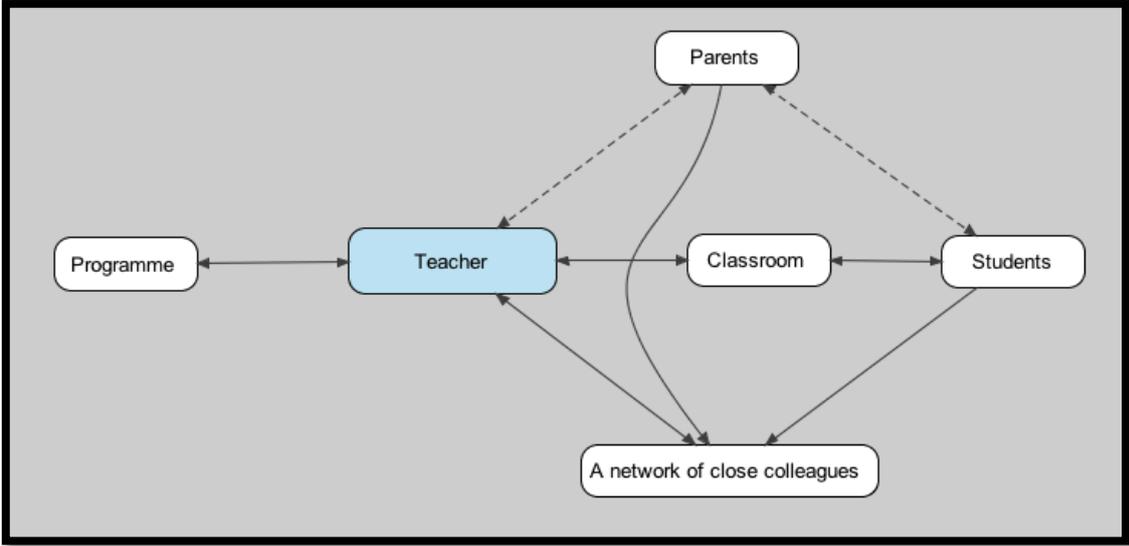
The dotted line indicates occasional interactions. The continuous line indicates direct interactions.

Both the *professional development approach* and the *restricted school improvement approach* were limited in contributing to school improvement. The macro-level leadership group, on the other hand, adopted *an extended school improvement approach* (see Figure 4).

Unlike the two other approaches, this group of teachers led change not only 'within' and 'beyond' classrooms, but also beyond their schools. They created an impact not only on their students, the school community, and headteachers, but also influenced parents and the educational authorities in their districts. As can be seen in Figure 4 above, they tried to shape the whole school culture, by engaging headteachers, the governor and parents in their initiatives and developing their capacities. They also tried to create organisational structures that would enable interaction and collaboration among colleagues. Their approach was the most likely to lead to school improvement.

Figure 4: An extended school improvement approach
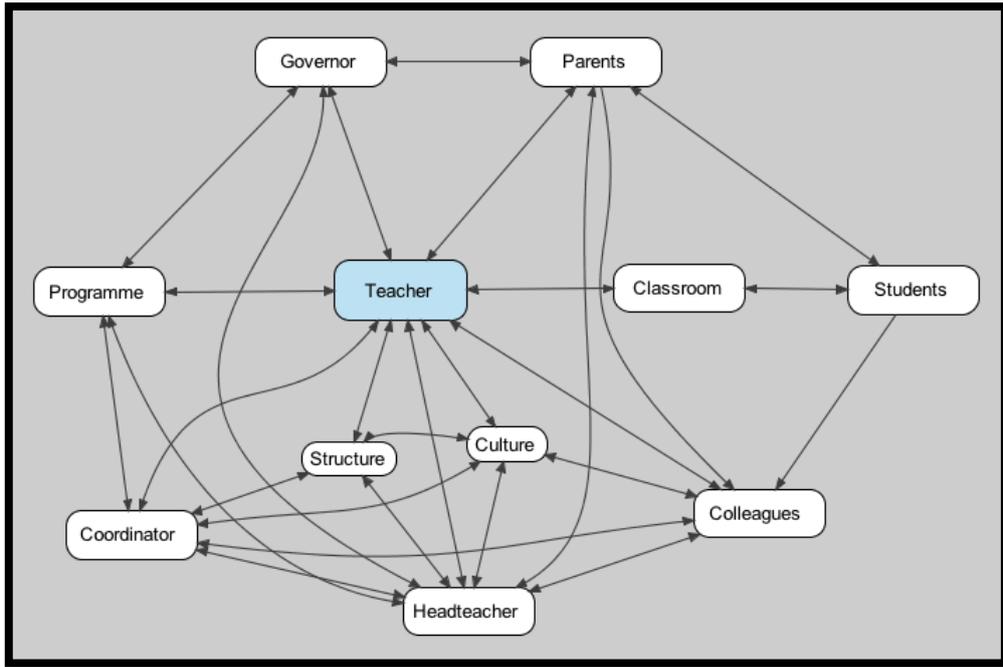
These three conceptions of leadership and three approaches could be placed at three levels of success, as shown in Figure 5 below. At Level 1, the programme's achievement was limited. Teachers focused only on their professional improvement and chose to lead change 'within' their own classrooms. At Level 2, teachers chose to lead change both 'within' and 'beyond' their classrooms. They improved themselves professionally and influenced their colleagues in their networks, but they did not mobilise the school community. Only at Level 3 did the programme accomplish its intended purpose. These teachers chose to lead not only 'within' and 'beyond' their classrooms, but also 'beyond' their schools.

It is also important to note that there was not a perfect relationship between teachers' conception of leadership and their approaches to school improvement. For instance, there were some teachers who adopted a micro-level conception of leadership, but who still adopted a professional development approach since their school culture was not supportive of their leadership behaviour.

Figure 5: Three levels of success
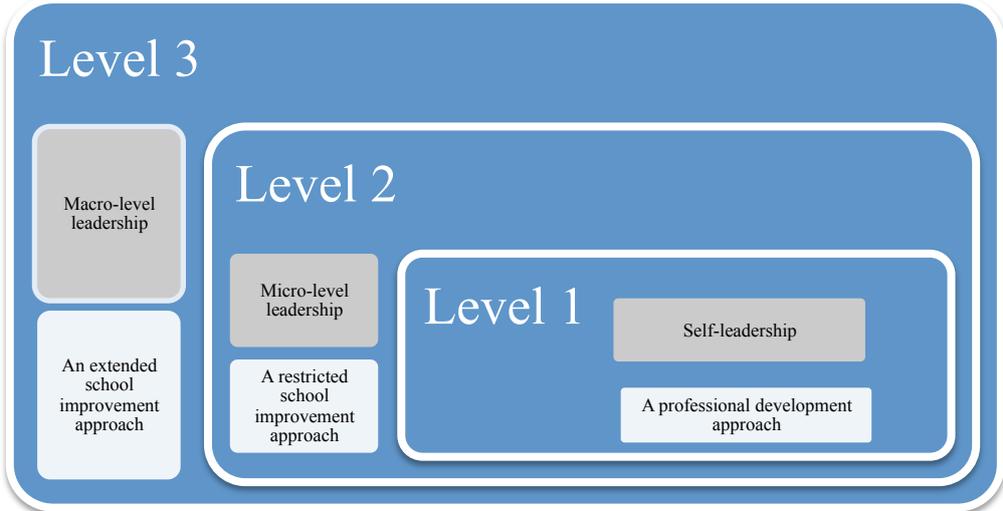
Teachers at these three levels also differed from each other in terms of other aspects of their leadership behaviour (see Table 2 below). Now I discuss how these three groups (Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3) differ from each other in the other categories of impact, listed in Table 1 above.

Table 2: Characteristics of different levels of impact

Categories	Sub-categories	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
Leadership capacity	Conception of leadership	Self-leadership	Micro-level leadership	Macro-level leadership
	Approach to school improvement	Professional development	Restricted school improvement	Extended school improvement
	Purpose of collaboration	Learning-focused	Influence-focused	Influence-focused
	Organisation of collaboration	Spontaneous	Informally-organised	Systematically-organised
	Approach to collaboration	Consecutive/ simultaneous	Consecutive/ simultaneous	Consecutive/ Simultaneous
	Awareness of values	High	High	High
	Self-efficacy	High	High	Middle/high
	Professionality	Restricted	Restricted/extended	Extended

Teachers' conception of and approaches to collaboration

The concept of leadership cannot be separated from the concept of collaboration since it is through collaboration that teachers influence colleagues and create meaning (Lambert, 1998). Therefore, the programme aimed to change teachers' belief about collaboration and develop

their collaboration capacity. 29 teachers (82.85%) reported that their conception of collaboration has changed.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My conception of collaboration has changed.	0 % 0	2.85% 1	14.28% 5	51.42% 18	31.42% 11

However, certain differences emerged among the three groups in terms of their conception of and approach to collaboration. First, teachers differed from each other in terms of the meaning they attached to the purpose of collaboration. The self-leadership group saw collaboration with colleagues as a way of learning new perspectives, methods and tools, gaining new information or receiving feedback. They were engaged in collaboration mostly for their own development rather than influencing others. For instance, one teacher said:

I did not think about showing my videos of classes to my colleagues, but I learnt so much from them. (Kent, Teacher 23)

I labelled this category 'learning-focused collaboration.' This approach was not necessarily negative in itself, but it limited their chance of influencing their colleagues or engaging in effective knowledge building. Both the micro-level and macro-level leadership group, on the other hand, viewed collaboration not only as a way of learning, but also influencing colleagues. I labelled their collaboration as 'influence-based collaboration.' They saw collaboration as an important opportunity not only to build knowledge together, but also to spread their influence to their colleagues as well. Again, it is important to note that 'influence-based collaboration' also includes 'learning-based collaboration'.

The qualitative data analysis revealed two different approaches to collaboration. A group of teachers chose to lead 'within' and 'beyond' classrooms *consecutively*. This notion was based on an idea of leadership being a two-step process: you create change in your classroom first to be sure of the success and then you spread it to colleagues.

The other group of teachers was engaged in leading both 'within' and 'beyond' classrooms *simultaneously*. They started to collaborate with their colleagues early on in the programme. They viewed leadership and learning as part of the same activity. One teacher said:

Before we did our activities, we designed them together and discussed what activities would be the best. This was helpful for my class and we influenced each others' views. (Otto, Teacher 33)

These two approaches were present both in the micro- and macro-level leadership groups. Although all the teachers were engaged in some form of collaboration, the programme promoted 'systematically-organised' collaboration embedded into the school culture for the purposes of both learning and leadership. Yet not all teachers adopted such a notion.

Awareness of values

The first aim of the programme was to enable the teachers to discover their values and articulate a vision underpinned by their values. 33 (94.28 %) teachers reported that the programme enabled them to become aware of their values.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have become aware of my values.	0 % 0	0% 0	5.7% 2	60% 21	34.3% 12

The programme achieved this through the activities of personal agenda setting and personal vision building. This awareness released intense enthusiasm and a strong sense of moral purpose in teachers. This can be contrasted with a relatively low levels of these feelings when teachers are required to implement a national programme or pursue agendas set by the Ministry (Frost, 2011). Many teachers said that they felt in touch with their values. For instance, one teacher said:

The programme made me crash into a wall. I became aware of my values and faced the gap between my actions and values. ...I even questioned my marriage. (Kent, Teacher 15)

There was no difference among the three groups in terms of articulating a strong value of student learning.

Self-efficacy

The programme also developed the teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy could be defined as 'a judgment of one's capabilities to bring about desired outcomes' (Bandura, 1989). 31 teachers (88.57%) reported that they feel more self-efficacious.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel more self-efficacious as a result of my participation in the programme.	0 % 0	0% 1	8.57% 3	54.28% 19	34.28% 12

Most teachers developed confidence as *a classroom practitioner*. They identified their own focus in their development work and took responsibility for their own problems. They stopped blaming external circumstances or pupil characteristics but concentrated on the ways in which they could improve the learning experience for pupils (James and McCormick, 2009). For instance, one teacher said:

> *When students did not learn, I always thought they were not motivated enough, did not work enough or were slow learners, but after we visited students' home as part of our development work, I saw that they really wanted to succeed but could not do it due to various difficult circumstances.... I started to see it as my responsibility to reach every student.* (Efes, Teacher 34)

Similarly, most teachers developed their sense of self-efficacy as *a change agent*. Once these teachers discovered their professional voices, they realised that they have the knowledge, skills, and expertise to act as change agents (Taylor *et al.,* 2011). However, the qualitative analysis revealed that the teachers in the macro-level leadership group were less likely to feel self-efficacious, although I observed them initiating pedagogical debate, challenging their colleagues' thinking or articulating their views on educational matters. The reason why they did not feel as self-efficacious is that they judged their leadership effectiveness according to their stated goals. Their ultimate goal was to shape the whole school culture. When they could not see a significant change in the school culture, some of them felt that they were a failure. For instance, one of the most committed teachers from the Level-3 group said:

> *I do not see myself as a leader yet. It is true that I changed myself, students and parents, but there is still a long way to go. Sometimes when I observe my colleagues, I feel like I have not achieved anything in the school.*
>
> (Otto, Teacher 28)

The teachers in the other two groups might have had less ambitious goals. Therefore, they might have felt more self-efficacious.

*Teachers' perception of professional roles*

21 teachers (88.57%) reported that their perception of their roles had changed.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My conception of professional roles have changed	0 % 0	2.8 % 1	8.6% 3	54.3 % 19	34.3% 12

I re-administered the 'professional roles questionnaire' that I had given before the programme, and compared the pre- and post-programme data. The analysis showed that the most frequently occurring and most valued practices before and after the programme were similar. However, what was evident in the pre- and post- questionnaire analysis, as can be seen in Chart 1 below, was that there was a considerable increase in the engagement of teachers in the practices related to leadership and school improvement.

Teachers become much more engaged in leading change. For instance, they created a playroom, a computer class, a maths class, and an activity depository room in different schools. What was important was that teachers did not replace their classroom focus with a school improvement focus, but added a leadership dimension to their professional roles.

Chart 1: The analysis of pre- and post-programme data on teachers' leadership practice
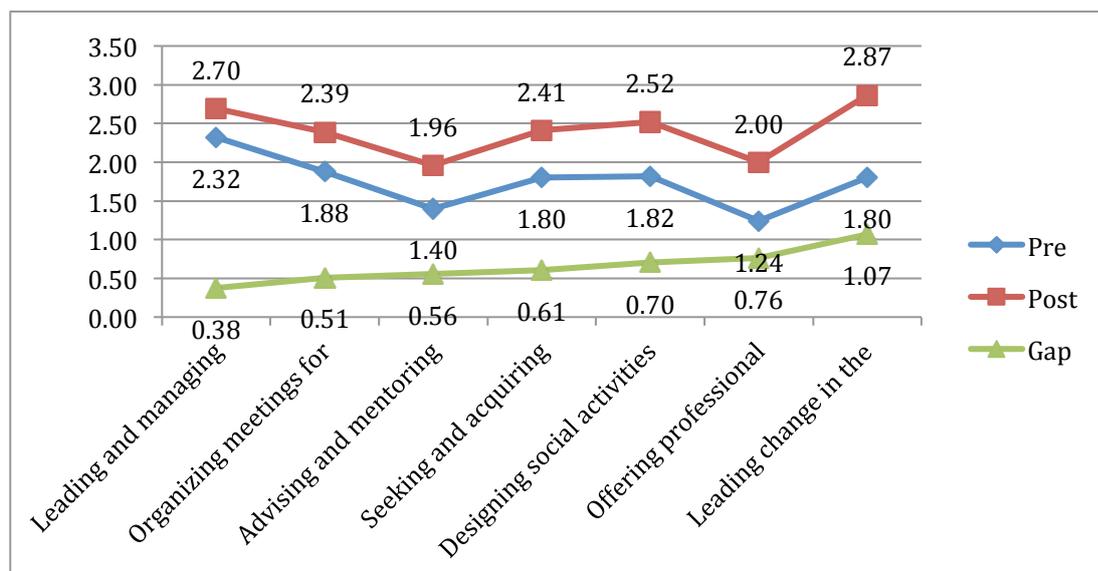
However, it was clear that it was mostly those teachers in the Level-3 group who were engaged in practices related to leadership and school improvement. Similarly, teachers started to value practices related to leadership and school improvement more (see Chart 2).

Chart 2: The analysis of pre- and post-programme data on the most valued teacher practices
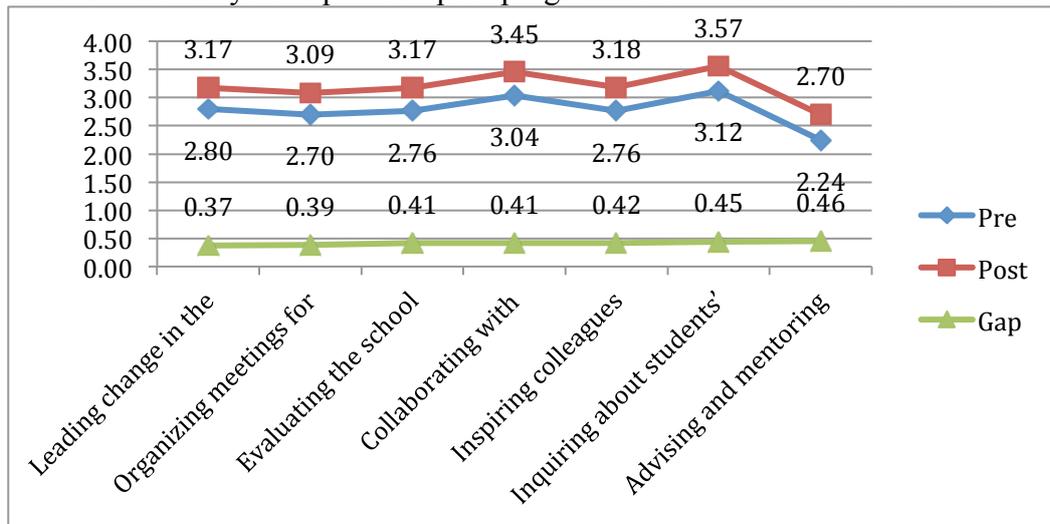
It was clear that teachers' professionality started to change from 'restricted' to 'extended' (Hoyle, 1972) where teachers started to see teaching also as leading change in their schools.

The evaluation of the programme clearly showed that most teachers changed their conception of leadership and adopted a notion of leadership that includes leading change not only in their classrooms but also beyond their classrooms and schools.

The extent to which teachers made a difference

The study produced enough evidence to claim that *teachers can really make a difference* if they are provided with appropriate support. The programme enabled teachers to contribute to school improvement in many ways. Firstly, teachers developed their professional knowledge about how to teach and facilitate pupils' learning through inquiry, experimentation and reflection. This is grounded knowledge, tried and tested in the field rather than transferred from somewhere else. Secondly, teachers also developed their knowledge about how to initiate and lead change, and manage processes of innovation. They started to lead beyond their classrooms, by influencing the beliefs and practices of their colleagues. They directly involved their colleagues in collaboration, collective inquiry and knowledge building. There was an increase in the level of exchanges of ideas, discussion, collaboration, reflective inquiry and knowledge building. Thirdly, some teachers started to lead beyond their schools by developing parents' and the governor's capacity to support teacher leadership. Parents started to become more involved in their children's learning and supported teachers' change

initiatives. Teachers were able to influence the policy environment and cultural norms of the community. In short, it was evident that teachers can make a difference if they are adequately supported despite the centralist structure.

The programme also made evident that the hierarchical and centralist structure of the system could be overcome with a strategic alliance with the educational authorities, especially the governor of the district. The District Governor was critical to the success of the programme since he offered resources, encouraged and supported teacher leadership, and formally legitimised the programme.

First, the governor offered considerable funding to each school so that they could cover the expenses of their development work, find new classes, create professional libraries and purchase refreshments for their meetings. He provided the schools' access to different expertise in the district. Second, the governor offered encouragement and emotional support. It was rare that a reform programme, which is not dictated by the central ministry, is whole-heartedly supported and promoted by the governor of the district and the local district authorities. The governor's involvement, support and messages made teachers believe in the significance of the programme as a vehicle to school reform. They felt supported, encouraged and motivated. Furthermore, the governor's support had a symbolic meaning. His involvement and support signaled that the programme was a significant one for the schools. Some teachers were able to use the governor's support strategically to influence their colleagues. Third and most importantly, the governor offered political support for teacher leadership. Through his involvement, engagement and statements, he legitimised teachers' efforts to lead change, offered protection against some of the imperatives of the policies, 'softened' the demands of the national education policy and tried to shape the expectations of the community. The message was clear - teachers can make a difference despite all the odds.

Recommendations

I have developed a home-grown framework of support through this study. At the time of writing, the programme still continues. Many other districts and the Ministry of Education want to adopt this approach. This is an indication of the value of the programme for local government and practitioners. Furthermore, what started as a programme transferred from the UK turned into a well-developed home-grown scheme. I adapted and developed several

scaffolding tools and activities that would support teacher leadership. Now I have a model that includes materials and strategies, which could be adapted for use in other schools in Turkey to support teacher leadership. However, this programme needs to be supported by policy, universities and government. Below I make some suggestions, some of which are derived from the report of the International Teacher Leadership Project (Frost, 2011).

1. Turkish Policy makers could develop policies that reflect the realisation that teachers are capable of leading innovation beyond current expectations.

2. In order to foster a climate of innovation, Turkish policy makers could consider the negative impact of policies and procedures that lead schools to use short-term improvement tactics rather than long-term capacity building strategies.

3. The Turkish Ministry of Education and relevant government agencies could reflect on ways of adjusting their systems to enable teachers who may have gained a certificate from another body (for example an NGO) to claim credit points that would be recognised as contributing to their professional and career development.

4. Faculties of education at universities in Turkey could review and revise their award-bearing frameworks to accommodate programmes of support for teacher leadership, with the university as partner rather than a sole provider. This may require procedural adjustments, but would also require a different understanding as to what constitutes knowledge.

5. Faculties of education at universities in Turkey could investigate the intellectual resources and materials that can be used to explain and justify processes of school improvement, leadership, innovation and knowledge building. They should also investigate how they might make such literatures and resources available to those who support teacher leadership.

6. The Turkish Ministry of Education could adopt policies that encourage capacity-building approaches to school improvement rather than quick-fixes and professional development approaches.

Conclusion

I conclude the paper by arguing that educational reform can be taken forward by mobilising the energy and creativity of teachers, and by enabling them to lead processes of innovation and development in their schools. I have demonstrated that it is possible, but at a cost. There are several personal, organisational, political and cultural challenges. With a strategic alliance with local authorities, these challenges could be overcome to some degree. In this case, teacher leadership could be a viable strategy to improve classroom practice, school culture, and student outcomes, but also the political and cultural context. Teachers showed that it could all be possible. As one teacher said: "The arrow has been released. There is no turning back!" We need to let every teacher shoot his/her arrow. Only then can we reform schools.

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