

## A Study of Teacher Leadership Concept in Institutional Documents in Spain

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Abstract	Article Info
<p><i>Although there is interest on educational leadership in Spain, research has focused on principal leadership and little has been investigated about teacher leadership. In the context of the International Study on Teacher Leadership (ISTL), this study aims to develop understanding of the concept of teacher leadership in institutional documents in Spain and to explore and analyze the dominant values and assumptions that can be identified. The review of the documents revealed a limited understanding of the critical importance of teacher leadership. Findings identified some aspects in the teacher leadership literature reviewed such as teamwork, accountability, openness to change, reflection, and advocacy, whereas inclusiveness, risk-taking, shared vision, and stability are scarcely identified. The increasing emphasis on teacher leadership dimensions in recent institutional documents note the need to go further with support for teachers' secondary roles as a consequence of the required modernization of the teaching profession.</i></p>	<p><b>Article History:</b>  <i>Received</i>                      February 10, 2020   <i>Accepted</i>                      September 20, 2020</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p><b>Keywords:</b>  <i>Teacher leadership, Institutional documents, Teachers' competencies, Content analysis, Attributes, Spain.</i></p>

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## **Introduction**

Great economic, political and social changes in our societies are instigating increasing demands on teachers of the XXI century. On one hand, educational systems are required to ensure that people have the skills required for the labor market (OECD, 2016). On the other hand, globalization is pressing the European Union to align the educational policies to facilitate students and staff mobility. Moreover, changes in social values have increased the expectations of the role of education in solving social problems (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2013; Hargreaves, 1994; Schleicher, 2018). Given this fact, teachers need some professional skills, including leadership, that will enable them to meet the new educational context and improve the quality of education. Teachers Matter report (OECD, 2005) reminded us of the important role that teachers play and their leadership. Research on educational leadership highlights the influence of principals in successful student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). More recently, academics are paying attention to teacher leadership (TL) as an important aspect of educational leadership since teachers are the ones able to promote change in schools because they deal with "the complexities involved in teaching" (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 134).

## **Context of the Study**

Spain is a country with a population of 46.7 million and is organized in seventeen Autonomous Communities (AC) which are given powers to legislate by the Spanish Constitution of 1978. This means that each AC has the power to establish its own education regulations based on the national education law enacted by the central government. In the last 39 years, Spain has had 7 national



education laws. The existing Education Act (LOMCE, 2013) is now being questioned by the majority of the political parties. A law focusing on teacher identity, functions and professional development has been long required but it is still pending.

The Spanish education system comprises pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education levels. Basic education is compulsory and tuition-free from 6 to 16 years (6 years at the primary level and 4 years in the compulsory secondary level). By the end of the fourth secondary year, students may choose to continue with secondary education and pursue university degrees or opt for basic vocational training.

Students can choose to attend a public school (67.3% of the total population of pre-primary, primary and secondary education), a partially government-funded independent school (25.9% of the total) or a private school (6.9% of the total) (MECD, 2018). For teachers, their access to the teaching profession varies depending on the type of school; in public schools, they are required to pass professional entrance exams and then they can get a position and become public servants. Principals play no role in teacher recruitment and selection; they simply do the best that they can with the teachers they are assigned by the central administration. There are some formal leadership roles that can be assigned to teachers in schools such as the head of studies, department chair, educational level chair, or class chair. Teachers are involved in decision-making processes through their delegates in the school council where strategic plans, annual objectives, and budget are approved.

## **Rationale**

This article will contribute to a better understanding of the concept of educational leadership, from teachers' perspective in the Spanish context. Based on an analysis of institutional documents, we will focus on (1) how teachers are expected to influence student achievement, school culture, decision-making process, and educational community; (2) explore the assumptions about teacher leadership identified in university programs and professional development and, (3) analyze the dominant values and assumptions that can be identified in those documents.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The acknowledgement of education as a crucial factor for the socio-economic development of our societies has influenced educational policymaking, which is increasingly receiving advice by organizations such as the EU, the World Bank, and UNESCO to focus on the competitive perspective in a global arena (Bangs & Frost, 2012). Therefore, international comparison is becoming an important issue. Educational leadership has long been researched because "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.5).

Nevertheless, research on school leadership has tended "to strip away the 'context specificity' needed to help practitioners understand how to apply findings in different schools" (Hallinger, 2018, p.8). According to Hallinger (2018), the institutional context does not only refer to the role definition and behavior of principals but also of teachers. And yet, as York-Barr and Duke (2004, p. 288) stated, "intentional and systematic efforts to support the capacity of teachers



and principals to share in school leadership functions appear to be severely lacking." The focus on teacher leadership is viewed as an opportunity to facilitate teacher participation, improve the professional work environment, promote schools' growth, and provide benefits for the students (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Moreover, it is important to know how school contexts may influence leadership practices, and since school contexts are also influenced by culture and legislation, we need to know more about the understanding of TL in context.

Since institutional structures do indeed shape the role definition and behavior of principals (Lee & Hallinger, 2012) as well as the existence of a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities in schools, the idea of teachers as leaders is easily misunderstood (Harris, 2003). New and different challenges compel teachers to participate and assume greater leadership responsibilities. Some of them opt to become administrators, but some of them wish to continue working in the classroom. These are the ones for whom teacher leadership may be a solution to fulfil their aspirations. Also, teacher leadership has become "an increasingly popular topic among educational policymakers and influential educational organizations as an important component of school reform" (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p. 135). Educational transformation is more than accountability, standardization, and testing, as "evidence is showing that the 'pull' of teachers leading innovation and change can be more powerful than the 'push' of many top-down reform agendas (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012)" as cited by Harris (2015, editorial).

Nevertheless, the little consensus and the lack of clarity about what teacher leadership is have been highlighted by researchers (Margolis & Huggins, 2012; Neumerski, 2012). As Harris (2014)

stated, "the idea of teacher leadership is based on the simple but powerful idea that everyday teachers lead their classroom, lead other colleagues and lead in the community" (Harris, 2014, p. 65). Moreover, Levin and Schrum (2017) insisted on the idea that every teacher can be a leader in various formal and informal ways as a manifestation of distributed leadership. Therefore, TL means moving beyond instructional leadership to expanded roles which include the evaluation of educational initiatives and the facilitation of professional learning communities, breaking the isolated culture of teaching (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). TL offers the possibility of a distributed leadership in action (Muijs & Harris, 2003). Crowther, Ferguson and Hann (2009) understood TL in relation to the construct of parallel leadership which focuses on the alignment of the school vision and classroom practices to sustain school revitalization, through the engagement of both teacher leaders and their principals in collective action.

TL definitions are scarcely stated by researchers who usually describe what teacher leaders do (Nguyen et al., 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In their literature review, York-Barr and Duke (2004) synthesized the characteristics of TL and described it as leading with colleagues, focusing on instructional practices, and working at the organizational level to align resources for teaching and learning improvement. Wenner and Campbell (2017) added that teacher leadership (1) goes beyond the classroom walls, (2) supports professional learning in their schools, (3) involves teachers in policy and /or decision making, (4) improves student learning and success and, (5) aims towards improvement and change for the whole school organization. Teacher leaders are seen as having the capability to influence the entire school, community, and profession. Nguyen et al. (2019), in a more recent and broader



literature review, described TL as influence and reciprocal collaboration and trust.

In a review of how teacher leadership is conceptualized and enacted in Spain Tintoré et al. (2019) identified 24 articles drawn from four databases. Research that expressly refers to teacher leadership in Spain continues to be scarce, but such studies have rapidly increased over the last decade. Now and then, teacher leadership is described as distributed leadership, leadership for social justice, or leadership for learning.

A clearer definition of teacher leadership in Spain is needed since only a few authors define the construct. Coronel Llamas (2005) explained that teachers' leadership "consists of the social distribution of leadership" (p. 474). Bernal and Ibarrola (2015) established relationships between teacher leadership and other kinds of leadership, such as instructional leadership and distributed leadership. These reports highlight that school leadership does not belong exclusively to the principal, and that teacher agency is needed if we aspire to develop leadership for learning. Arbués and Ibarrola (2014) added that teacher leadership recognizes the participation of teachers as crucial to achieving improvements in the conditions of teaching and learning. Balduzzi (2015) developed a definition of teacher leadership by stating that,

*"in true educational leadership, teachers participate actively and relevantly in the process of defining school goals and contribute through their classes to carry out and develop the values with which the school is identified, as well as managing and harmonizing the complex and multiple interpersonal relationships inside and outside the classroom" (p.145).*

## Methodology

In the context of the International Study of Teacher Leadership (ISTL)<sup>1</sup>, "a rationale for researching teacher leadership is presented based on the need to provide clarity to the definition of the concept and to understand better how to facilitate teacher leadership development" (Webber, 2018, p. 1). First, an analysis framework was established based on key concepts and considerations found in the relevant literature, which were named as attributes and indicators. The attributes identified include accountability, advocacy, cultural responsiveness, inclusiveness, openness to change, professionalism, reflection, risk-taking, shared vision, stability, and teamwork (Webber, 2018, p. 4).

As an early stage of the ISTL research project, document analysis was used as an analytical method to examine and interpret data "in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge" (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). We aimed to provide context and data, in order to understand the historical roots of teacher leadership and to track the changes and development of this concept; therefore, the use of document analysis seemed pertinent (Bowen, 2009).

Then, we proceeded to identify relevant document sources such as ministry policy documents, teacher education program

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<sup>1</sup> This report is based on research done as part of the International Study of Teacher Leadership conducted in Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Mexico, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, and Turkey. The multi-stage study commenced in 2018. For more information, contact Charles Webber at [cfwebber@mtroyal.ca](mailto:cfwebber@mtroyal.ca) and see the study website: [mru.ca/istl](http://mru.ca/istl)



descriptions, teacher union documents, teacher certification or teacher standards documents, and accreditation requirements for teacher education providers. Due to the fact that Spanish education regulations are diversified depending on the different AC, we decided to choose national documents and focus on the Madrid Autonomous Community, and on primary teaching.

The documents identified and their characteristics (authorship, year of publication, objectives, public addressed) were the ones included in Table 1.

Table 1.

*Relation of Institutional Documents: Authorship, Year of Publication and Objectives*

Document	Authorship	Year of publication	Objectives
Teaching work assessment report	Madrid Autonomous Community Department of Education (CAM)	2001	Set the competencies of teachers
White paper about teaching degrees	Quality accreditation agency for universities (ANECA)	2005	State the requirements to be accomplished by Initial Training Education degrees in Spanish Universities
Organic Law of Education 2/2006 (LOE)	Spanish government (Ministry of Education)	2006	Regulate Spanish education system, school organization, curricula and teachers' accreditations to teach in each educational level
ORDEN ECI/3857/2007	Spanish government (Ministry of Education)	2007	To establish requirements for Initial Training Education to be allowed to teach in the Spanish education system
Social support for	Report authored by	2008	To inform about respect for

the teaching profession (COFAPA)	university teachers coordinated by COFAPA (Confederation of Parents' Association)		teachers and their prestige in the educational community
Competencies of primary teaching degree	University Complutense of Madrid (UCM)	2009	To establish the competencies to be accomplished by graduates in primary teaching degree programs
Deontological ethics of the teaching profession	Professional Association of Doctors and Graduates (CDL)	2010	Ethics code to be respected by teachers in the profession
Organic Law of education for the improvement of the quality of education 8/2013 (LOMCE)	Spanish government (Ministry of Education)	2013	A revision of the previous education law (LOE): regulate the Spanish education system, school organization, curricula and teachers' accreditations to teach within each educational level
White paper about the teaching profession and its school environment	Marina et al.	2015	Report requested by the Ministry of Education about the need to improve teacher training and professional development
Proposal about the access to the teaching profession	Conference of Deans from Spanish Education Faculties	2017	Proposal to the Ministry of Education on the need to improve teacher training and access to teaching degrees

These institutional documents were studied through a reflexive iterative process (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009) which started with a content analysis of the documents (Klenke, 2008) and the identification and organization of components of documents related to the attributes in the analysis framework. The characteristics and



indicators for each attribute (see Table 2), were used as a code template to organize raw data (Boyatzis, 1998).

Table 2.

*Attributes and Indicators Underlying Teacher Leadership and Excerpts from Institutional Documents*

Attributes	Indicators	Excerpts
Accountability	Take responsibility for outcomes Evaluation and progress monitoring Provide focus	Design, plan and evaluate the teaching-learning process within the framework of the school as an educational organization (UCM, 2009, p. 7)
Advocacy	Student learning needs provide focus Teacher leadership has an activist dimension	The heterogeneity of students, from diverse backgrounds and social contexts, with different cultures, interests, abilities, skills and expectations, requires teachers to face increasingly diversified educational demands and greater demand for individualization (LOMCE, p. 107)
Cultural responsiveness	Curricula and pedagogy should include students whose identities have been insufficiently considered	Equity, which guarantees equal opportunities for the full development of personality through education, educational inclusion, equal rights and opportunities that help overcome discrimination and guarantee universal access to education, acts as a compensatory element for personal, cultural, economic and social inequalities, with special attention to those arising from any type of disability (LOE, 2006, p. 14)
Inclusiveness	Teachers should be part of the decision-making Career stage considerations are important	Participation of the educational community in the organization, governance, and operation of schools (LOE, 2006, p. 15)

Openness to change	Go beyond enculturation to build capacity for transformation	Promote the democratic education of citizenship and the practice of critical social thinking (UCM, 2009, p. 7)
Professionalism	Teaching is always an ethical activity Teachers are the single largest influence on students' academic achievement	Enable greater autonomy to the teaching function, in a way that responds to the demands of greater personalization of education, taking into account the principle of teacher specialization (LOE, 2006, p. 8)
Reflection	Reflective practice should be ongoing	Acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the psychosocial pedagogical dimensions of teaching (ANECA, 2004, p. 194)
Risk-taking	Safety and trust are important	Guarantee adequate training to face the challenges of the educational system and adapt teaching to the new learning needs (LOE, 2006, p. 63)
Shared vision	Alignment of goals and mission are valued	Every teacher must participate in the management of the school, and in helping it become a "school that learns" (Marina et al., 2015, p. 15)
Stability	Practices should be sustainable	Value individual and collective responsibility in achieving a sustainable future (ECI, 2007, p. 53748)
Teamwork	Professional learning communities provide a venue for collaboration	Teacher training as a responsible professional, with the capacity to make innovative decisions through teamwork in the school (ANECA, 2004, p. 194)

Furthermore, a thematic analysis was also performed as it was important to identify emergent attributes from our specific context (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Therefore, inductive codes were assigned to quotations that described these emergent attributes. To



provide rigor and increase the credibility of the study, the team used researcher triangulation. Firstly, researchers identified segments in the text of one document, and classified them in the attributes column in the table. Thus, coder training consisted of manually coding one document by the three researchers to have a clear understanding of the attributes and codes being used. Then, each researcher did the same with the documents assigned to each one. For intercoder reliability, the researchers independently proceeded to review all the fragments selected from all the documents for each attribute, as well as the ones for emergent attributes, that went beyond those considered in the initial analysis framework.

Results were compared and helped to contrast the coding procedures, in order to confirm findings and to bring different perspectives to the analysis (Denzin, 1978). Consequently, the document with all the fragments manually coded was computerized using the atlas ti 7.0 software. Taking into account the team discussions, some segments were recoded. The data reduction process (Miles et al., 2014) was done holistically (both within and across attribute columns), sorting and reassembling data in new significant ways once the initial coding was finished (Creswell, 1998). This axial coding allowed the connections among the different attributes identified by the team of researchers (Charmaz, 2006). Data was constantly compared and recoded to better organize ideas and pinpoint concepts that seemed to cluster. Possible connections that emerged from this analysis were displayed in charts and graphs, which were discussed and completed by the researchers in light of the data and their reflections about them. At the final stage of data conclusion and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994), central themes were selected to better depict the concept of teacher leadership drawn from the institutional documents.

## Findings

The first result from the search of the documents was the realization that there were no documents disseminated by teacher unions or patronal institutions. A study financed by a Confederation of Parents' Association (COFAPA) was found. Moreover, there was not a single document with a title directly related to our research (such as teacher standards or teacher competencies). Teacher competencies were highlighted in general in educational laws, or when talking about initial teacher education, respect for teachers or professional development. In fact, from the ten documents reviewed, three of them referred to requirements for initial teacher education; another three were published by the Ministry of Education (the two educational laws -LOE and LOMCE-), and one by the Department of Education of the Madrid Autonomous Community. Another one emerged from the professional association of teachers (a non-union professional graduates organization to represent and help teacher graduates in their professional lives). Another was a study report done by a confederation of students' parents, and the last two are recent proposals to modify initial formation and professional development of teachers (a draft for a "teacher statute", still pending).

A quantitative analysis of the institutional documents started with frequency counts of the word "leadership", "leader", "lead\*" which could give us an idea of the importance given to this concept in the documents under study. Results showed that the word leadership or lead\* appeared in the following documents: ANECA (19 times), UCM teacher degree competencies (twice), LOMCE (once), and the report for the Ministry of Education (26 times).



Results indicated the limited use of the word leadership, leader, lead\* in the documents, with few exceptions such as the documents from the quality accreditation agency (ANECA), the teacher education program descriptions, and the report written for the Ministry of Education (2015).

After the first coding of the documents, new attributes emerged and new codes were established: teaching prestige, professional identity, families, school coexistence, teachers' professional responsibility, social values, and citizenship. Moreover, some fragments coded in the accountability attribute required two new subcodes which were added: personalized education and students' holistic formation. After this process, codes and subcodes were counted to identify the frequency of all of them and the documents from which they emerged (see Table 3).

Table 3.  
*Frequency Counts for TL Attributes in the Institutional Documents*

Year publication	CAM	ANECA	LOE	ORDEN				LOMCE	Report for Ministry of Education	Conference of Deans	TOTAL
	2001	2005	2006	ECI	COFAPA	UCM	CDL	2013	2015	2017	
Teamwork	1	1	5	3	2	3	2	2	6	5	30
Citizenship			7	5			4	2	1		19
Personalized education		3	5	2		1		2	2	1	16
Advocacy	3		1	4		1	1	3	1	2	16
Openness to change		2	3	3	1	4	1		2		16
Values			4	3	1	1	3		4		16
Teacher social responsibility		1	4	3			2	1	3	1	15
Professionalism	1	3	4				2	3	1	1	15
Accountability	1	2	1	4	1	1	2		1	1	14
School coexistence			3	2			3	2	3		14
Reflection	1	2	2	1			2		1	4	13
Families	1		1	3	1	2	2	1	2		13
Professional identity		2		1			1		3		7
Shared vision			1		2				4		7
Teaching prestige			2				1		2	2	7
Inclusiveness			1	1				1	1	1	5
Cultural responsiveness			1	1		1	1		1		5
Holistic formation			2				1				3
Risk-taking			1								1
Stability									1		1
	8	16	48	36	8	28	22	10	39	18	233



As shown in Table 3, the attributes which appeared the most in the institutional documents were: teamwork, personalized education, citizenship education, student diversity (advocacy), professional responsibility, reflection, and accountability. It was interesting to highlight that Webber's (2018) attributes clearly identified in the Spanish institutional documents in the following order of relevance: teamwork, accountability, openness to change, reflection, and advocacy. Inclusiveness, risk-taking, shared vision, and stability were categories scarcely identified in the document analysis. As for cultural responsiveness and professionalism, other meanings emerged from the study of the documents. Cultural responsiveness was always linked to tolerance and respect concerning multicultural and gender issues. Professionalism was identified with characteristics related to professional development. The aspects that were associated with the ethical consideration of the teaching profession were coded as teachers' social responsibility.

Then we started looking for the attributes that could be clearly identified based on Webber's (2018) selection and discussed those that could be clustered, taking into account the co-occurrence of the codes and going back and forth from codes to data. The connections made with the attributes enabled us to use graphs to better represent the themes that expressed the underlying meaning of teacher leadership in the relevant institutional documents. Once the graphs were displayed, we could distinguish three entirely different perspectives of teacher leadership depicted from the documents studied: student-teacher, community-teacher, and school-teacher relationships.

### **Community-Teacher Relationship**

This perspective was the most distinctly emphasized, with 94 citations out of a total of 233 (40% of the total). This approach included two clearly identified topics: social justice and teacher social responsibility (see Figure 1). Social justice emphasized aspects such as citizenship, democratic social skills, and social values (e.g.; respect, tolerance, and sustainability). Teacher social responsibility encompassed different subcategories mostly related to teacher identity and teaching prestige. The theme of openness to change, also understood as the capacity for transformation, may be recognized as being the cause of the other two previously stated. The topics were evident in almost all the documents studied, with the exception of the proposal from the Conference de Deans (2017) (which only reflects the teacher prestige and teacher social responsibility).

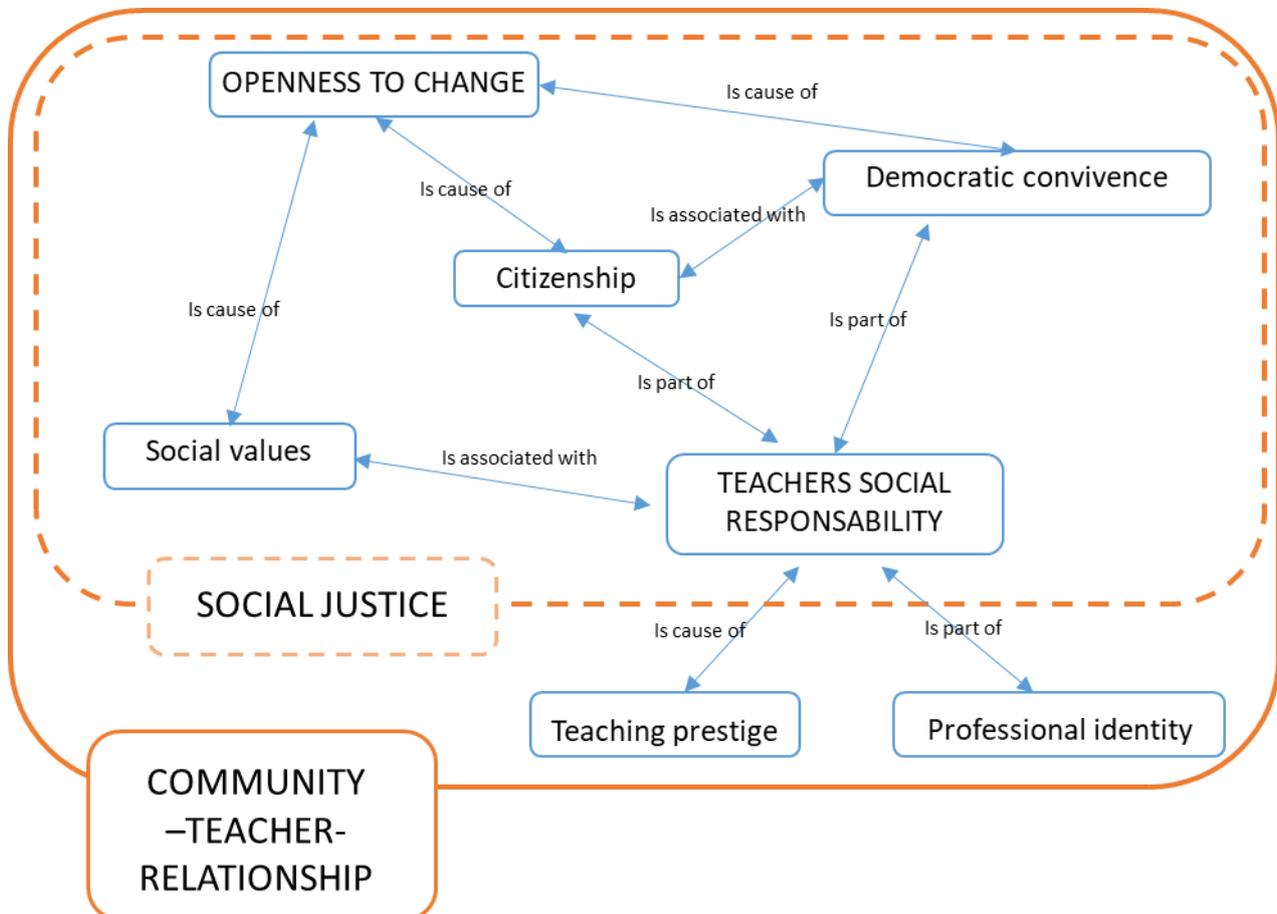


Figure 1.  
*Connections between TL Attributes Related to Community-Teacher Relationship*

**Student-Teacher Relationship**

This perspective was the second most distinctly emphasized in all documents analyzed (29% of all citations). As illustrated in Figure 2. It specifically included the category of accountability with the subcategories of holistic formation and personalized education, with

a strong connection to students’ learning needs (as a part of advocacy). In the Spanish context, aspects referring to students whose identities could have been insufficiently considered raised topics such as immigration, multiculturalism, gender, and respect for different religious beliefs. It was remarkable that all documents -except for ANECA (2004) and the one from the Conference of Deans (2017)- pinpointed families as a category related to accountability, and students’ holistic formation, in two ways: the necessary communication between family and school to follow students’ achievement as well as their implication to attain it.

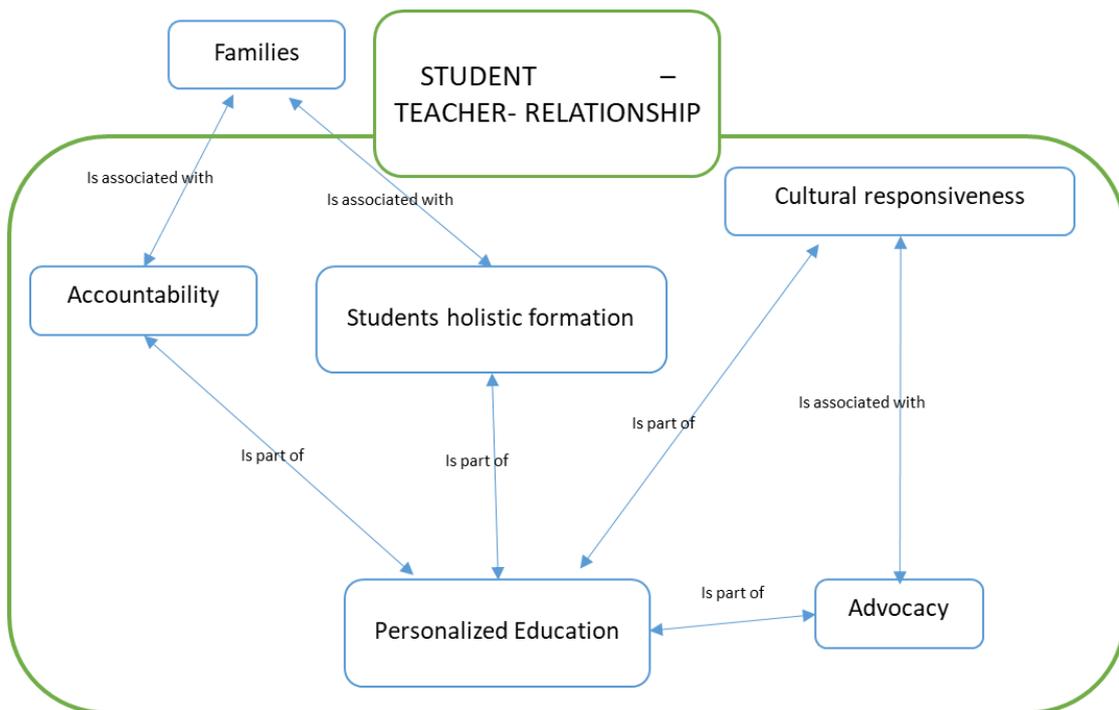


Figure 2.

*Connections between TL Attributes Related to Student-Teacher Relationship*

### School-Teacher Relationship

This dimension was the one with fewer references in the institutional documents studied (only 6% of all). As depicted in Figure 3, it comprised aspects that had more to do with teacher commitment and participation in the school such as sharing a common vision, taking part in decision-making (inclusiveness), and the consequences of this, such as risk-taking and stability. These last two attributes were almost absent from all documents. The few references to these aspects were stated in the laws -LOE (2006) and LOMCE (2013)- and in the recent report for the Ministry of Education (Marina et al., 2015) as well as in the study conducted by COFAPA (2008).

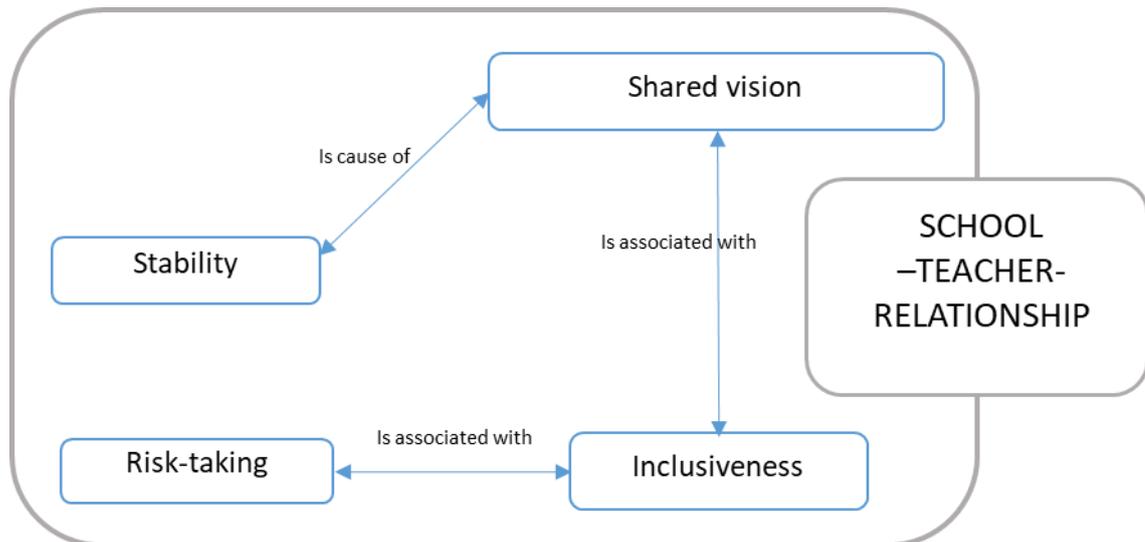


Figure 3.  
*Connections between TL Attributes Related to School-Teacher Relationship*

### Transversal Attributes of Teacher Leadership

There are some attributes present in the documents that seemed to connect the perspectives previously described. They represented 25% of the codification. These categories were teamwork, reflection, and professionalism (see Figure 4). Professionalism was depicted as the need to keep updated through professional development with methodologies that better meet students' attitudes and interests, especially with the aid of technology.

The first one, teamwork was the attribute with the most number of citations (30) coming from all the documents studied. The other two attributes were equally important. Reflection was highlighted in almost every document, excluding the COFAPA study. As for professionalism, it was also reflected in almost all of them, except for the COFAPA (2008), ORDEN ECI 3857 (2007), and LOMCE (2013).

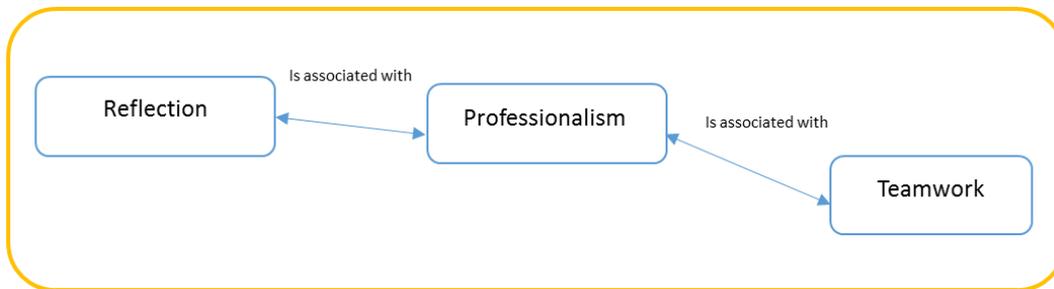
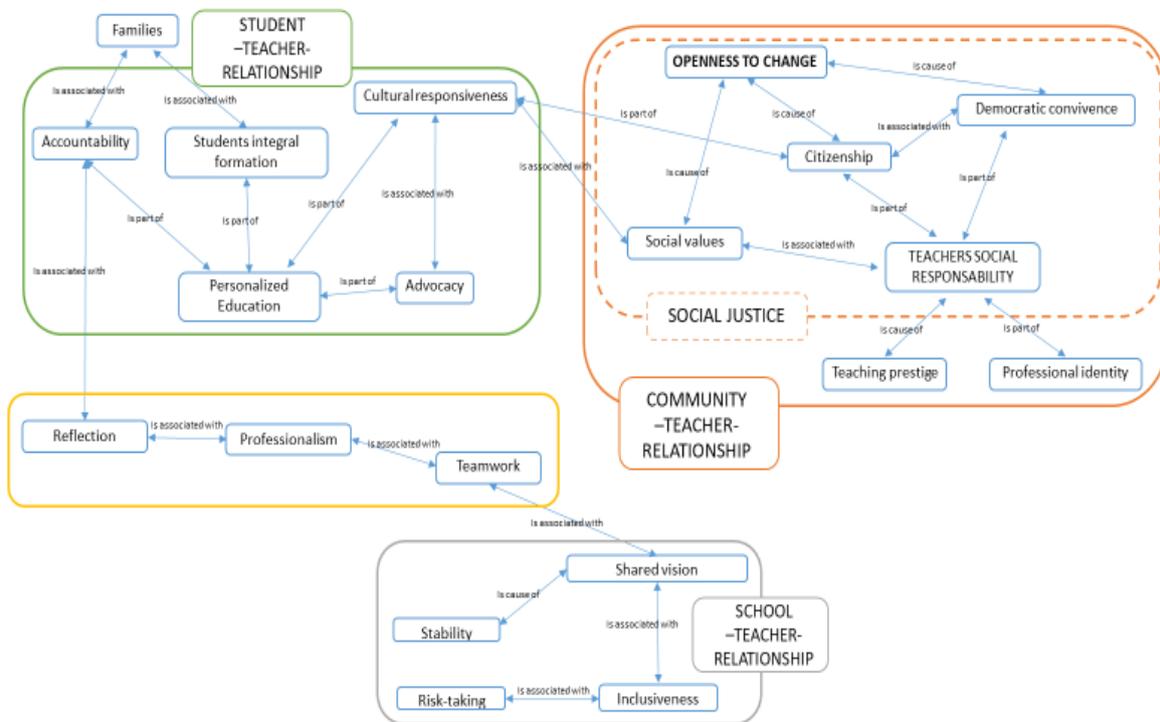


Figure 4.  
*Connections between TL Transversal Attributes*

We further realized that the attribute openness to change played a role as a connector among the three perspectives. It gave sense to the teachers' function to go beyond their classroom and empower them to go further in school influence, in order to promote the social values that society needs. In the Figure 5, all of the connections between TL attributes are represented.



Graph 5.  
Connections between TL Attributes According to Institutional Documents

## Discussion and Implications

Results from the study of a sample of the institutional documents in Spain confirm the fact that TL is a topic that basically appears in government laws, requirements for teacher training and proposals for its improvement. It is interesting to note the absence of documents enacted by teacher unions that represent teachers' voice, which highlights their lack of involvement in educational policy-making. The document analysis incorporates the main issues highlighted in the educational arena: social justice, citizenship, and democratic education, new social values such as sustainability or environmental education, and the culture of accountability. At the same time, they reflect the social changes that affect education and how the roles of the State, teachers, and families are changing.

On one hand, the growth in expectations that education can contribute to solving social problems (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman 2013; Hargreaves 1994) increases pressure on States to take responsibility for their citizens' education. This implies asking teachers to expand their functions and to take charge of aspects of education that families have been doing for generations. Therefore, it is reasonable to note the attributes of citizenship, peaceful coexistence, social values, and accountability in the educational laws and the documents related to teacher training. The role of families on students' achievement is important, although scarcely stated.

On the other hand, social changes that are having a great impact in recent years, such as the increase in immigrants arriving in Spain, increase student diversity and cultural and social inequity. Therefore, teachers are required to know how to facilitate the participation of diverse learners in their own learning process, to lead the development of personalized learning in education; and to encourage



all students to maximize their learning by addressing personal, cultural, economic and social inequalities, as well as supporting students with disabilities. However, standardization and bureaucratic pressure have been put forward due to the culture of accountability. In a certain way, there is a contradiction between the need to enhance teachers' identity and professionalization through the enlargement of their autonomy and, at the same time, a sense of mistrust of teachers and their competencies, which may explain the lack of teaching prestige in Spain.

Although the importance of teamwork is critical, the reality of teachers' work is characterized by a culture of isolation and a lack of professional feedback from mentors, peers, and principals (TALIS, 2018). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that literature on TL in the Spanish context insists on professional learning communities as well as on the importance of sharing best practices (Tintoré et al., 2019). Furthermore, associations of employers are contributing to teachers' professional development through the dissemination of best practices and the promotion of innovation -e.g.; the program developed by *Escuelas Católicas* known as Movement for educative innovation (2015)-. Although reflection is also identified as an important aspect of TL, the lack of time, the heavy workload, and the absence of a culture of self-evaluation constitute serious obstacles to ongoing reflection.

The fact that teachers face difficulties inherent to their work, such as the loss of authority, bullying, attending to students' diversity and lack of family involvement, highlights the importance of adequately preparing committed teachers who can face these challenges (Pedró et al. 2008; Sarramona 2005). It is clear there is a need -present in the documents analyzed- to know how to address

conflicts and coexistence problems and to help students learn how to solve them.

For both formal and informal TL, the lack of a stable workforce, especially in public schools where a big percentage of teachers are in temporary positions, is a condition that makes more challenging the nurture of stability and shared vision attributes.

In summary, the documents studied stated that teachers have to be able to prepare their classes very well, making use of effective methodologies, teamwork, and cooperate, in an interdisciplinary way, within their classrooms. But at the same time, they have to be able to participate in the school community and to influence educational community outside their classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to contribute to a better understand of the concept of educational leadership, from the teacher perspective in the Spanish context. The analysis of the documents identified revealed a limited understanding of the crucial importance of TL. Most of the TL attributes that Webber (2018) categorized through his study of relevant literature on this topic are present in the Spanish institutional documents. Teamwork, accountability, openness to change, reflection, and advocacy, are the most frequently stated, whereas inclusiveness, risk-taking, shared vision, and stability are scarcely identified. There was little evidence of reference to the many challenges that policy documents are now emphasizing for future schooling agendas (Schleicher, 2018), such as the need to prepare students to face uncertain futures more holistically.

The documents place importance on aspects related to community, school and the student, and on what teachers are



expected to accomplish in these three areas. Nevertheless, few connections between them are evident. In some ways, the documents can be understood as a desire of what institutions would like teachers to do. Somehow, there is not a connection between principal and teacher leadership. Empowering teachers without the support and awareness of principals is almost impossible as noted by Crowther et al (2009). We know that the first key element in students' achievement is teacher quality (OECD, 2005); but we also know that the second more important factor for quality in education is principal leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004). The connection between them is well explained by Bangs and Frost (2012, p. 6) who stated that "a more helpful interpretation of distributed leadership is one where the school principal engineers the professional culture so that the capacity of teachers to lead is enhanced."

Enhancing TL requires that "initial teacher education programs have to prepare new teachers to play an active role in the design and running of education, rather than just following standardized practices" (OECD, 2011, p. 13). It also means there is a need to professionalize the teaching career "for an increase in the status and recognition of teachers to better attract and retain talented candidates, promotion of professional development and effective educational practices as well as teacher participation in decision making about classroom and organizational issues" (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 256).

We observed that the most recent documents, especially the proposals for an improvement of the teaching profession (Marina et al., 2015; Comunidad de Madrid, 2019) include the full dimensions of TL. This fact is aligned with the functions teachers reported in OECD documents (OECD, 2005; OECD, 2013) which encompass

responsibilities for each student, the classroom, the school, parents and the whole community (Vara & Gómez, 2019). The increasing emphasis on TL dimensions in recent institutional documents in Spain note the need to go further with support for teachers' secondary roles as a consequence of the required modernization of the teaching profession (Scheerens, 2010). Enhancing TL in Spain could help to improve the quality of education because research has reported that this type of educational leadership "aims to improve instructional quality, school effectiveness and student learning" (Nguyen et al., 2019, p. 67).

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