Leadership for inclusion and special education: Novice teachers walking the walk.

Fiona King

Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

Anna Logan

Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland

Abstract	Article Info
Expectations of teacher leadership for school improvement have gained increasing currency in recent years. While extensive research on teacher leadership and practicing teachers exists, comparatively little research exists at pre-service level and there is little empirical data regarding leadership experiences and practices of novice teachers particularly in the context of leadership for inclusion. This paper draws on empirical data from six primary teachers in the Republic of Ireland who had undertaken a leadership for inclusion and special education module in their pre-service education and evidenced their willingness and readiness to practise leadership in schools. During their first year of teaching the teachers were engaged in a community of practice to help bridge the knowledge practice gap related to leadership for inclusion. A visual ethnographic research approach was used to track the teachers as they transitioned from 'talking the talk to walking the walk'. Analysis of results indicates teachers' ability to exercise leadership in their own classrooms, in collaboration with others within and beyond their schools. This paper extends the knowledge base on how leadership development in pre-service education evolves in the experiences and practices of a group of novice teachers and subsequent implications for teacher educators.	

Cite as:

Introduction

The expectations of teacher leadership (TL) for school improvement and enhanced student learning continues to gain attention (Leithwood et al., 2004; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012). Teacher leadership has its roots in the 1980s but there remains little consensus on an agreed definition. Some key literature reviews undertaken (Nguyen et al., 2019; Poekert, 2012; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) reveal varied conceptualizations of TL. Many focus on TL as *positions* with the term 'teacher leader' being used interchangeably with TL. Less clear is whether these are limited to the school improvement agenda or if TL is understood in a more democratic and organic manner where teachers develop a collective responsibility for the learning outcomes of all learners (King & Stevenson, 2017; OECD, 2005). This is especially important with leadership for inclusion and special education (King, 2011) a variant of teacher leadership, where schools strive to achieve equity and excellence for all (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE), 2013; OECD, 2012).

While there may be extensive research on supporting TL of practicing teachers there is a dearth on TL at pre-service level and in the first years of teaching (Forde & Dickson 2017; Pucella, 2014) and especially in the context of leadership in inclusive and special education (Billingsley, 2007). Building upon a previous research

project which explored pre-service teachers' potential to exercise leadership for inclusion (King, 2017) this paper focuses on the leadership experiences of six newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

The initial study employed Bond's (2011) theoretical framework for leadership development of pre-service teachers. As pre-service teachers they were encouraged to articulate their values and a vision for inclusive education (Bond, 2011) and develop core expertise of inclusive pedagogy (Pantic & Florian, 2015), which was enhanced and shared through many collaborative and leadership experiences (Author, 2017). This expertise was not equated with experience but rather tacit knowledge (Forde & Dickson, 2017) developed over the course of their university education. A focus on continuing professional learning and reflective practice was also central to their leadership development (Forde & Dickson, 2017; King, 2017) Results showed pre-service teachers' willingness, readiness and efficacy for exercising leadership for inclusion (King, 2017).

To support the NQTs exercising leadership for inclusion in their first year of teaching they engaged in a community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2008) to "build their expertise collectively as pedagogues in order to lead the change needed to address the needs of diverse learners" (Forde & Dickson, 2017, p. 95). This paper reports on this longitudinal element as six NQTs embarked on exercising leadership for inclusion in practice. It uniquely provides empirical data about how leadership development in pre-service teacher education evolves in the shared lived experiences and practices of six early career teachers. Findings from this project aim to answer a call to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice (Hick et al., 2017) to prevent the wash out effects of teacher education (Forde & Dickson, 2017; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) and to provide teacher educators with

insights for supporting TL for inclusion and special education at pre-service level.

Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is an elusive concept (Forde & Dickson, 2017), "rarely defined" and often lacks a deep theoretical basis (Wenner & Campbell, 2017, p.134). In this paper TL is considered as practice, an "organic form of leadership" from below where teachers have the autonomy to focus on what matters most to them (King & Stevenson, 2017, p. 661). Within this TL is collaborative and reciprocal (Ainscow & Sandhill 2010; Forde & Dickson, 2017) a part of professional practice and moral duty (Bond, 2011; King, 2017). Teacher leadership is centred on continuing "professional learning and pedagogical activity, focused primarily on student needs" (MacBeath et al., 2018, p. 3) and allows for all teachers to lead within and beyond the classroom, collaborating and influencing school culture and practice (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001).

Teacher leadership may be reflected in being able to "facilitate broader professional learning within the school community" as a result of individual teacher professional development and learning (Poekert et al., 2016, p. 308). It may begin with teachers influencing colleagues, sharing expertise (Angelle & DeHart, 2016) or it may involve individual teachers "confront[ing] barriers to the education of students with disabilities, rather than accepting the norms and values of the status quo" (Billingsley, 2007, p. 166).

Teacher leadership for inclusion is a variant of TL and conceptualised as within the remit of all teachers to use individual and collective agency to address issues of inequality and social justice (Pantic & Florian, 2015) and to empower special educators as

informal leaders or non-positional leaders (Woods & Roberts, 2019; York-Barr et al., 2005) collaborating and advocating for students with disabilities.

Teacher motivation and self-efficacy (Yeo et al., 2008) are important for inclusion as many teachers feel they lack the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise to meet the needs of all learners (Hick et al., 2017; O'Gorman & Drudy, 2010). Normalising differences (Florian & Spratt, 2013), developing relationships with students and including learner voice (Flynn, 2018) are also pivotal for inclusion.

Method

This paper reports results from a qualitative study exploring NQTs' experiences and practices of TL for inclusion in their first year of teaching. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the NQTs conceptualise TL?

2. To what extent did they exercise leadership for inclusion in their first year of teaching and how did they do it?

3. What factors supported them in exercising TL for inclusion?

Twenty-four NQTs, in a university in the Republic of Ireland, who had undertaken a leadership for inclusion module as part of a major specialism in special and inclusive education were invited to engage in a CoP in their first year of teaching to explore TL for inclusion. Six volunteered and four face-to-face meetings were held over the course of their first year as NQTs. (Table 1). The study was approved by the ethics review panel of the university.

Table 1

Participants and Settings

CODE NAME	SCHOOL SETTING	CLASS AGE GROUP(S)
Aisling	Designated disadvantaged mainstream primary school	7-8 year-olds
Emily	Designated disadvantaged mainstream primary school	9-10 year-olds
Marie	Mainstream primary school	4-9 year-olds
Liz	Designated disadvantaged mainstream primary school	5-6 year-olds
Edel	Mainstream Primary school	8-10 year-olds
Lucia	Mainstream Primary school	7-8 year-olds

A visual ethnographic exploratory approach was adopted to understand the lived experiences of the participants utilizing visual tools (Buch & Staller, 2014). Images are "part of how we experience, learn, know as well as how we communicate and represent knowledge" (Pink 2013, p. 1) and provided a rich, or 'thick' description of the leadership experiences of the participants (Robson, 1993). The use of image-based research created reflective spaces contributing to understandings that were transformative for the participants (Moss et al., 2007; Prosser, 1998).

At the first CoP meeting the focus on TL for inclusion and group expectations were clarified. Given that these were NQTs and four were undergoing probation in their first year, it was important

that this work supported rather than added to their workload. Taking photographs was less cumbersome than writing reflections and adding captions supported individual critical and reflective thinking (English, 1988). At meeting 1, the NQTs were invited to take photographs illustrating their leadership for inclusion. There was no limitation on the number of photographs to be taken or guidance in terms of what should be included as it was important that they represented the teachers' own perceptions and experiences of TL. The only stipulation was that there were no photographs of children. Most participants took between 5-8 photographs for meetings two and three. The real insights came from the collaborative discussions at the meetings where participants chose a photograph, shared the caption and thinking behind it, followed by all others in the group asking clarifying questions (Moss et al., 2007) or commenting in a way that pushed thinking into "critical conversations" (Ryan, 2014, p. 371) about leadership for inclusion. The study was conceptualized as a participatory research project within which the NQTs who might be considered relatively powerless and without voice within school structures would be supported and facilitated in documenting, reflecting on and analysing their experiences of TL for inclusion thus harnessing "their collective power, to create knowledge about their experience, and to take action" (Bernard, 2000, p. 168).

Data Collection & Analysis

Various sources of data (transcripts of meetings, photographs and captions) were collected which enhanced trustworthiness allowing for data triangulation (Hammersley, 2007). As themes emerged, the researchers were noting these and seeking disagreements and outliers. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) six moves; affixing codes, noting reflections,

identifying patterns, confronting generalizations in the form of theory, identifying a small set of generalizations; and isolating patterns/differences (8). This involved the three components of data analysis as suggested by Miles and Huberman; data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusion. A process of inductive data analysis was undertaken, and the data were reduced to a small number of themes from which the conclusions were drawn and verified following discussions around points of convergence and divergence (Moss et al., 2007): understanding of TL; experiences of leadership; and supporting factors.

Results and Discussion

This paper will now explore how leadership development evolved in the work and experiences of these six NQTs in their first year of teaching. It will firstly look at any changes in their understanding of TL followed by their experiences of exercising leadership both within and beyond the classroom. Finally, the supporting factors for exercising TL will be outlined.

Understandings of Teacher Leadership

As pre-service teachers they defined TL as having a vision and being committed to that, collaborating with others, having courageous conversations, an ability to foster change, to influence others, to engage in reflective practice, ongoing learning and to make a difference (King, 2017). During their first-year teaching when the NQTs were grappling with these understandings in situ, there was evidence of a continued focus on maintaining a vision, on collaborative dialogue and on professional learning.

139

For example, Liz said TL is "…trying to keep what you believe to be important…don't give up on it...despite the difficulties." (Meeting [M] 1). Some difficulties noted by Aisling (M1) included entering a "classroom with literally nothing in it" and feeling "so overwhelmed" at not being able to address individual needs…

> *that was something that really, REALLY [stressed in tone of voice] bothered me every single day… literally waking up first thing in the morning thinking 'OMG, am I going to be able to give them something meaningful to do today.*

Dealing with a gap between her values and practice (Hick et al., 2017) was challenging. However, Liz subsequently demonstrated leadership by enacting these values (Brown, 2006) through getting to know the individual learners, collaborating with her mentor and other teachers to devise a plan for what she could do within the classroom.

> *I suppose what I learned from that, was that, it has to take that time at the start; you can't know from day one, how to help every single child in your class that has a special need. (Liz, M1)*

Interestingly Liz noted how as a pre-service teacher, school placement was "all about me and what I need to do" by comparison to teaching in her first year where she is very aware of the children and their needs, it's such a big part of everyday...the full picture of the child is so much more complicated" (M1). This plausibly reflects high levels of efficacy which are deemed central to having better relationships with learners (Yeo et al., 2008). Giving the learners a voice (Flynn, 2018) and allowing them to exercise leadership in their own learning and behaviour was valued by all NQTs. Aisling sought

their views and was "willing to negotiate, to be fair, because, you know, I always talk about being fair with the children, I'll ask them do you think this is fair…" (M1). This example also evinces her commitment to inclusion (Yeo et al., 2008).

A focus on collaborative dialogue (MacBeath et al., 2018) was highlighted by all as central to TL as exemplified here:

being a leader in communicating with parents… some parents...can't read or write...I sent the note [letter to all parents] home so that the child isn't being excluded in getting the note, and then I just ring… tell them what the note says. (Edel, M1)

Marie noted the importance of collaboration (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010) for enhancing teaching and student learning (Poekert et al., 2016).

It's great to be involved in the meetings…invited to give some ideas and it even helps with the maths lessons that I teach in class...you get different ideas of how you might teach a certain topic. (M3)

Lucia also talked about "when you're straight out of college, there's an awful lot of going next door, saying 'will I do this or this way or what do you think? What way is it normally done?" (M4). However, as the year progressed Lucia felt "but now you can say, no in this room it works better if I do it this way, and going with it, and not being afraid to try it, and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work" (M4). She equated this to "having the confidence that you know what you're talking about, trusting that, you know what you're doing" (M4) reflecting a growing sense of efficacy (Yeo et al.,, 2008).

141

However enhanced professional learning was also noted by Emily as central to TL.

> *I would definitely be still asking questions, and I still will be in 20 years' time, but it's just knowing that I can still ask questions... it doesn't just stop just because we've been out of college. (M4)*

The NQTs exercised TL for inclusion to enact their values despite a sense of being 'new. Their experiences will now be explored first in terms of their experiences within and then beyond their own classrooms and schools.

Experiences of Teacher Leadership for Inclusion Within the Classroom

Regarding their own classroom practice, all six teachers talked about the importance of focusing on diverse needs, what learners can do and normalising differences (Florian & Spratt, 2013) and on the development of collaborative relationships. As evinced by Aisling (M1)

> *everyone's different but everyone has something to contribute to the class or to the lesson… there's a child in my class who can't read or write but he's an amazing artist, and in drama he does amazing things that nobody else does, so to point that out... show, that everyone's good at different things...*

Liz reflected on her time as a pre-service teacher on school placement when she felt her emphasis was "curriculum based" whereas as an NQT she had the confidence to get to know the learners better, to take "a long-term view of them" and focus on "[pupil] effort put in "as distinct from "results" (M2). Aisling also

emphasized developing relationships, "to meet them, see them, teach them, be with them, get to know them…see the children as they are, in front of you...who they are and what they might need (M1). For example, she talked about a learner who struggled with spellings and "who was very conscious of being different" (M2) by not having a spelling test copy like his peers. Aisling included this learner by ensuring "when the test copies were handed out, they would receive their own copy just like everybody else". However, his copy had "a little label [inside] to show which page he was on…" and the activities to do using his personalised spelling list (see Figure 1).
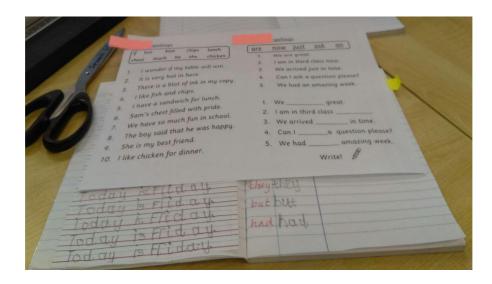

Figure 1
Personalised Spelling List

Edel demonstrated leadership through collaborating with the SEN team and the parents of a learner struggling with spelling tests. Edel's belief in all learners being able to progress (Florian & Spratt, 2013) was reflected in getting to know the learner's significant preference for visual approaches. In response, Edel introduced

143

"flashcards with her spellings, a picture and the word…" and also made this available to others, thus normalising differences (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

Emily exercised leadership for inclusion with a learner with ADHD who struggled with adhering to school rules while on recess. She collaborated with the learner (Flynn, 2018) and the SEN teacher to devise a list of "good choices" (M2) to make the school rules more accessible. A problem-solving approach was also adopted by Lucia who observed a pupil with an individual behaviour chart which was drawn up by a previous teacher in consultation with the parents. Lucia felt the learner did not need this individual chart.

I explained to the child that, you know, you're doing really well…with your behaviour, so I think we're ready to move on from the star chart…We'll give this a go and if we have to, we'll call your parents in and we'll go back to the star chart... he was kind of like, happy nearly to get rid of it" [individual chart]. (M2)

Lucia had the confidence to make changes to prevent this learner being singled out as different (Florian & Spratt, 2013) and use the same system for positive behaviour as other learners. On reflection Lucia stated:

I was kind of afraid, the teacher planned the last one, the individual chart it's [removal of chart] working well so far - but we're only 3 weeks in [using it]… I was going to keep up exactly what the teacher had in place, for the first week, because I couldn't have arrived in and changed everything…but I didn't see a need for it, so…

144

Other examples of commitment to inclusion highlight the tension these NQTs experienced between acknowledging their own expertise and being 'new' to their career. Edel felt TL was about sharing this expertise and not being "afraid to make suggestions as a new teacher and feel like you have enough knowledge" (M1). Similarly, Liz stated:

> *coming in as a new teacher, you don't know it all, but you might know some things that other people haven't heard about...
> be humble in the fact that you are a new teacher and you've a lot to learn but at the same time, when you do know, or when you do have an idea, to really put it out there and see if it can help. (M1)*

Their commitment to sharing expertise (Angelle & DeHart, 2016) was also evinced by Lucia who commented that

> *I had to meet the school psychologist the first week, and I recognised all the language they were talking about...IEPs [individual education plans]... but I was in the school only a week...is this my place yet to suggest things, but the meeting with the psychologist, the next one isn't until after Christmas when it's nearly too late, so I just...had to bite the bullet and go for it... I felt like I was talking for most of the meeting. (M1)*

The above examples arguably demonstrate the NQT's commitment to inclusion prioritising learner voice (Flynn, 2018), collaborative dialogue (MacBeath et al., 2018) and normalising difference (Florian & Spratt, 2013). While it might be suggested that this is just good practice, "the complexity and "messiness" of classroom life challenges us to resolve the discontinuity between the aspirational and the lived reality" (MacBeath et al., 2018, p. 88)

145

particularly as NQTs. While many of the above examples are related to the teachers' classrooms the teachers also demonstrated leadership for inclusion by using their individual agency to enact their values outside of the classroom (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

Experiences of Teacher Leadership for Inclusion Beyond the Classroom

While leadership is often built on experience and credibility the NQTs were able to seize opportunities to share their expertise within and subsequently beyond their schools. Aisling demonstrated leadership in the development of a sensory room in her school.

> *A small team of people were collaborating on it… fallen apart and nothing was getting done...I got really excited with the thought of this because I had seen the sensory room, in operation in the ASD unit where I was on placement... (M3)*

Aisling tried to use Onenote, a collaborative tool that allows you to share pictures, links, ideas and "research papers on why this would be a good idea". However, the teachers did not engage with this but were nonetheless open to all her suggestions. This didn't deter Aisling who reflected,

> *in terms of collaboration, that Onenote didn't work…but the sensory room is wonderful and I've contributed…I've got some supplies for it from my previous employer, and fundraising a lot…my little contribution outside the classroom, and I do feel really confident to lead that because I would feel that I have a lot of knowledge, not experience, experience is not needed in setting it up…I think being excited and being driven and motivated is much more important in getting a project like that done. (M3)*

Aisling's distinction between knowledge and experience is interesting in light of literature focusing on leadership as sharing expertise (Angelle & DeHart, 2016). Aisling drew upon tacit knowledge gained during pre-service education to influence change (Forde & Dickson, 2017) and shows her increasing efficacy as a 'new' teacher.

Liz also noted that as an NQT calling other professionals was "hard and it takes a bit of like building up your confidence" (M1). Grappling with exercising leadership in situ as an NQT was also challenging for Emily who was asked to give her opinion on the development of a classroom for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) during a grade level meeting with the Principal and Deputy Principal. While Emily said she had a voice in this she found it 'hard', despite having done a 2-week placement in an autism class as a pre-service teacher. She was conscious that placement and being the teacher in an ASD class were very different and felt her contributions could influence decisions being made at a school level.

> *I didn't want to be giving an opinion, like, an uninformed kind of opinion, that mightn't be as important as teachers in the school that have gone through the experience of having the ASD pre-school in the school…so I was not afraid, but I was conscious of giving a decision… I wanted to make sure that before I even spoke to anyone that I knew what I was thinking myself. (M3)*

Aisling and Marie (M3) understood Emily's dilemma in terms of the distinction between having knowledge of ASD and experience of working in an ASD class, evidencing the tensions experienced by the NQTs as they transition from pre-service teacher to NQT. Marie

147

said, "it's their experience, we're still, you know, only starting out, I know we've come through teaching practice, but there's still a lot we probably haven't experienced" (M3). Aisling and Marie agreed that while they should contribute it was important to respect the experience of others once again reflecting the debate between expertise as experience and expertise as knowledge and skills (Forde & Dickson, 2017).

Of significance is that, towards the end of their first year of teaching, Emily and Edel presented their photographs on exercising TL for inclusion at a professional conference, evincing their ability to "facilitate broader professional learning" (Poekert et al., 2016, p. 308). The Director of the Teaching Council of Ireland was present and the feedback they received from him was very empowering for them "…he seemed very hopeful for his grandchildren being in a school and going into schools with teachers like us" (Emily, M4). This surprised the NQTs who felt "it was norm for us, and what we felt we were doing was obviously to benefit the children…for us it's not a big deal… [it was] "putting [our] knowledge into practice" (Emily, M4). The Director subsequently invited them to present their work at various Teaching Council workshops.

Interestingly, at the time of writing (three years on) all six teachers have now presented at conferences. Noteworthy here is the importance of such wider experiences being available to these NQTs as part of the CoP in their first year of teaching. Given the dearth of research on TL for inclusion at pre-service level (Forde & Dickson 2017; Pucella, 2014) it is important to now explore the factors that supported these NQTs to exercise leadership and the implications for teacher educators.

Factors that Supported NQTs in Exercising Teacher Leadership for Inclusion

This section provides insights for supporting teacher leadership development especially in the context of inclusion, equity and/or special education (Billingsley, 2007; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). A number of key themes emerged from the data; community of practice; reflective practice; top-down support and efficacy.

Community of practice (CoP).

The CoP meetings aimed to bring the teachers together in collaborative dialogue (MacBeath et al., 2018) to support them in exercising TL for inclusion. All mentioned support from the CoP, how it affords a time to reflect on practice (Edel, M1), to talk with others who focus on leadership for inclusion (Aisling, M1)). Liz talked about the specialism enabling her to focus on "the kind of teacher that you want to be" and the CoP enabling her to "stay in touch with the teacher that I'm wanting to be" as it would be easy "to slip into bad habits" (M1). She later argued "the reality is just re-light the fire" (M4) and highlighted the importance of the CoP as a support for this. Thus, the CoP may act as a means of preventing the wash out effects of university teacher education (Forde & Dickson, 2017; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981) as it appears to provide a sense of belonging and connectedness as teachers work to build a community with others who share their values and interests (Wenger, 2008). Arguably the CoP afforded the teachers wider experiences, for example, presenting at a conference and reflective practice, which may have helped them to crystalize and possibly confirm their experiences exercising leadership for inclusion.

149

Reflective practice.

Taking photographs was reported by all six NQTs as influencing them to reflect on their practice in a transformative manner (Moss et al., 2007; Prosser, 1998). Photographing the activity "requires you to stop and think about your practice" (Aisling, M4). Having to put a caption on the photographs to share with others at the CoP meeting required a purposeful reflection (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) and meaningful consideration (Schon, 1991) of practice. Such conscious and reflective practices are deemed essential for teachers engaging in TL (Forde & Dickson, 2017).

The CoP provided a supportive atmosphere for critical conversations (Ryan, 2014) about leadership for inclusion. The teachers liked taking the photographs, and felt it wasn't extra work as it was photographing and reflecting on what they were already doing. They began using photographs in various ways. Aisling stated "it's useful to just snap it, something that you do, something you see someone else do…the picture will make everything come back to you…it's a lot more efficient" (M4). Edel cited another example where all teachers in her school were obliged to submit a personal reflection with their monthly planning to their principal and submitted her reflection using a picture and caption instead of a narrative. Of significance here is the top-down support for teachers to exercise leadership.

Top-down support.

The principal is "happy for people to put in pictures now…to reflect using the picture" (Edel, M4) evidencing both the importance of top-down support for leadership from below (King, & Stevenson, 2017) and teachers from below influencing school culture

(Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) regardless of their role, authority or position in a school (Woods & Roberts, 2019; York-Barr et al., 2005). Interestingly some NQTs experienced a tension around peer acceptance for exercising leadership. Liz expressed her concerns about support from colleagues

> *I do think there are teachers in my school that are a bit cynical but then in ways I can see why... it's just… trying to keep what you believe to be important keep your mind that it's the kids that you're kind of focussing on. (M1)*

Despite NQTs growing confidence in their first year of teaching and their commitment to leadership for inclusion there is a role for support from above within schools where principals conceptualise TL as something that is collaborative and shared across all teachers (Woods & Roberts, 2019).

All six NQTs reported high levels of self-efficacy in exercising leadership for inclusion in their final year of teacher education (Author, 2017). However, "a teacher's competence has meaning only within the context of real-world teaching duties and demands" (Yeo et al., 2008, p. 193). Within their first year of teaching, confidence was cited as both a support and an issue. Liz reported

> *confidence is an issue, like raising an opinion about things because sometimes people in the staff room make a comment like…'oh once you're here a few years you won't be saying that' but sometimes I think 'maybe I'll keep a little bit quieter' you know, you just won't be as inclined to speak up… not that you wouldn't say what you think, but it's just a little bit of insecurity. (M1)*

151

However, lacking confidence seemed to be more related to exercising leadership beyond the classroom. This may be reflective of having high levels of self-efficacy related to inclusion but feeling a lack of support at times. Regarding leadership within the classroom, their commitment to inclusive practice and high levels of efficacy gave them the confidence (O'Gorman & Drudy, 2010) despite difficulties as reflected by Aisling

> *I'm nearly even more motivated when I see how important this is for children that, really, really need the support, and even if you don't have time, you're going to have to give it to them, or even if you can't do it and you don't know how to do it, you're still going to have to try, because, you just have to... there's no point in getting your experience dampened, that's why you're there, you're there to help them and you're there to draw on whatever you have and the people around you to make it work for them. (M2)*

This is particularly important given that TL has been linked with efficacy beliefs and collective efficacy linked with a positive impact on student learning (Angelle & DeHart, 2016). Enhancing individual efficacy within teacher education along with enhancing collective efficacy within schools is arguably of great significance.

Conclusion

What is evident is the importance of unlocking the potential for leadership for inclusion and special education at pre-service level as NQTs can 'walk the talk' even in their first year of teaching highlighting some key issues for consideration. Results from exploring the lived experiences of NQTs, who had engaged in leadership development in their pre-service education, suggest that

despite tensions around being 'new' these teachers did exercise leadership for inclusion and special education in their classrooms and beyond. It is important to acknowledge that this sample may not be representative of larger numbers given their subsequent engagement in a CoP as NQTs. There is a dearth of empirical data exploring TL at pre-service level and into the first year of teaching (Forde & Dickson 2017; Pucella, 2014) and a dearth of data exploring teacher leadership for inclusion and special education (Billingsley, 2007). This article provides in-depth analysis of the work and experiences of six NQTs and allows us to consider some implications for teacher educators and principals in schools.

Their understanding of TL for inclusion built on their experiences within pre-service education where the NQTs talked about enacting their values and maintaining their commitment to inclusion and special education despite difficulties. They emphasized the importance of collaboration with colleagues, parents and the child with less emphasis on themselves as teachers and more on the children and their needs.

The NQTs reflected on examples of leadership for inclusion within and beyond the classroom by focusing on the diverse needs, normalising difference and focusing on the child and not themselves. As they grappled with their new role as an NQT, the teachers enacted their values by seizing opportunities within the school and leading on projects, sharing their expertise and having the confidence to speak up when needed. Noteworthy are the experiences afforded to them within the CoP during their first year of teaching which arguably helped them consolidate their values and practices related to inclusion. Central to this was the use of photographs to aid

153

reflection on experiences. All of these supported the development of the NQTs efficacy during their first year.

Since efficacy appeared to play a key role in supporting teachers to enact their values, developing this needs to be considered by teacher educators at pre-service level as evidenced in Author (2017). Providing lived experiences of TL through experiential learning (Brown, 2006) can support pre-service teachers in entering the profession with high levels of efficacy (King, 2017). The use of photographs and captions to support conscious and reflective practices (English, 1988) may be a useful tool for supporting critical conversations (Ryan, 2014) around leadership for inclusion.

It is incumbent on teacher educators to explicitly identify for pre-service teachers the necessary supports for TL within and beyond schools, for example, top-down support, peer acceptance, collaborative practices such as CoPs and reflective practice to further enhance their individual self-efficacy in their early years as teachers. What may be required at school and system level is a deeper understanding of the need for top-down support and collaborative cultures in schools to support NQTs to exercise leadership and develop collective efficacy around student learning. Furthermore, a more nuanced discussion of what is meant by TL at all levels of the system may provide further clarity for all involved.

References

Ainscow, M., & Sandill, A. (2010). Developing inclusive education systems: The role of organisational cultures and leadership. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*(4), 401-416. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802504903

Angelle, P. S., & Dehart, C. (2016). Comparison and evaluation of four models of teacher leadership. *Research in Educational*

Administration and Leadership, *1*(1), 1-34. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1207883

Bernard, W. (2000). Participatory research as emancipatory method: Challenges and opportunities. In D. Burton (Ed.), *Research Training for Social Scientists* (pp. 1-20). Sage http://methods.sagepub.com.dcu.idm.oclc.org/book/research-training-for-social-scientists/d21.xml

Billingsley, B. S. (2007). Recognizing and supporting the critical roles of teachers in special education leadership. *Exceptionality, 15*(3), 163-176. https://doi.org/10.1080/09362830701503503

Bond, N. (2011). Preparing preservice teachers to become teacher leaders. *The Educational Forum, 75*(4), 280-297. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2011.602578

Brown, K. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*(5), 700-745. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0013161X06290650

Buch, E. D., & Staller, K. M. (2014). What is feminist ethnography? In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Feminist research practice a primer* (2nd ed. pp. 107-144). Sage.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning in communities. *Review of Research in Education, 24*, 249-305. https://doi.org/10.2307/1167272

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. (EADSNE). (2013). *Organisation of provision to support inclusive education- literature review.* Author.

English, F. W. (1988). The utility of the camera in qualitative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 17*(4), 8-16. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.3102/0013189X017004008

Florian, L. & Spratt, J. (2013). Enacting inclusion: a framework for interrogating inclusive practice. *European Journal of Special*

Needs   Education,   28(2),   119-135.   https://doi-
org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/08856257.2013.778111

Flynn, P. (2018). Marginalised youth speak back through research:
Empowerment and transformation of educational experience.
In R. Bourke & J. Loveridge (Eds.), *Radical Collegiality through
student voice.* Springer.

Forde, C., &Dickson, B. (2017). The place of leadership development
for change agency in teacher education curricula for diversity.
In L. Florian & N. Pantic (Eds.), *Teacher Education for the
Changing Demographics of Schooling: Issues for Research and
Practice,* (pp. 83-99). Springer.

Hammersley, M. (2007). *Educational Research and Evidence-based
Practice*. Sage.

Hick, P., Solomon, Y., Mintz, J., Matziari, A., Ó Murchú, F., Hall, K.,
Cahill, K., Curtin, C., & Margariti, D. (2017). *Initial Teacher
Education for Inclusion Phase 1 and 2 Report.* (Report No. 26.).
National Council for Special Education.

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2001). *Awakening the sleeping giant:
helping teachers develop as leaders.* Corwin Press.

King, F., (2011) The role of leadership in developing and sustaining
teachers' professional learning. *Management in Education,
25*(4), 149–155.

King, F. (2017). Evolving perspective(s) of teacher leadership: An
exploration of teacher leadership for inclusion at preservice
level in the Republic of Ireland. *International Studies in
Educational Administration, 45*(3), 5-21.

King, F., & Stevenson, H. (2017). Generating change from below:
what role for leadership from above? *Journal of Educational
Administration, 55*(6):657-670.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004).
Review of research: How leadership influences student learning.
Wallace Foundation.

MacBeath, J., Dempster, N., Frost, D., Johnson, G., & Swaffield, S. (2018). *Strengthening the connections between leadership and learning*. Routledge.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Sage.

Moss, J., Deppeler, J., Astley, L. & Pattison, K. (2007). Student Researchers in the Middle: using visual images to make sense of inclusive education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 7*(1), 46-54. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2007.00080.x

Nguyen, D., Harris, A., & Ng, D. (2019). A review of the empirical research on teacher leadership (2003–2017). *Journal of Educational Administration, 58*(1), 60-80. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JEA-02-2018-0023

O'Gorman, E., & Drudy, S. (2010). Addressing the professional development needs of teachers working in the area of special education/inclusion in mainstream schools in Ireland. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 10*(1), 157-167. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-3802.2010.01161.x

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005). *Teachers Matter*. OECD.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2012). *Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*. OECD.

Pantic, N., & Florian, L. (2015). Developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice. *Education Inquiry, 6*(3), 333-351. https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v6.27311

Pink, S. (2013). *Doing visual ethnography* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Poekert, P. E. (2012). Teacher leadership and professional development: Examining links between two concepts central to school improvement. *Professional Development in Education, 38*(2), 169-188. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/19415257.2012.657824

Poekert, P., Alexandrou, A., & Shannon, D. (2016). How teachers become leaders: an internationally validated theoretical model of teacher leadership development. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 21*(4), 307-329. https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2016.1226559

Prosser, J. (1998). The status of image-based research. In J. Prosser (Ed.), *Image-based research* (pp.97-113). Falmer Press.

Pucella, T. J., (2014). Not too young to lead. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 87(1), 15-20. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/00098655.2013.818524

Robson, C. (1993). *Real world research: A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers.* Blackwell.

Ryan, J. (2014). Promoting Inclusive Leadership in Diverse Schools. In: I. Bogotch & C. Shields (Eds.), *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Social [In]Justice,* (Vol 1, pp. 360-376). Springer.

Wenger, E. (2008). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Wenner, J. A., & Campbell, T. (2017). The theoretical and empirical basis of teacher leadership: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(1), 134–171. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0034w654316653478

Woods, P., & Roberts, A. (2019). Collaborative school leadership in a global society: A critical perspective**.** *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 47(5),* 633-677. *https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177%2F1741143218759088*

Yeo, L. S., Ang, R. P., Chong, W. H., Huan, V. S., & Quek, C. L. (2008). Teacher efficacy in the context of teaching low achieving students. *Current Psychology, 27*(3), 192-204. https://doi.org/10.1007/S12144-008-9034-X

York-Barr, A. J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research, 74,* 255–316. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.3102%2F00346543074003255

York-Barr, J., Sommerness, J., Duke, K., & Ghere, G. (2005). Special educators in inclusive education programmes: Reframing their work as teacher leadership. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 9,* 193–215. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/1360311042000339374

Zeichner, K., and Tabachnick, B. R. (1981). Are the effects of university teacher education washed out by school experiences? *Journal of Teacher Education,* 32, 7–11. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177%2F002248718103200302

About the authors:

Fiona King is an Associate Professor at the School of Inclusive & Special Education, and Programme Chair of the Doctor of Education programme at the Institute of Education, Dublin City University. Fiona is associate editor of the peer-reviewed Professional Development in Education Journal. **(https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjie20/current).**

Anna Logan is an Associate Professor at the School of Inclusive & Special Education, and Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning at the Institute of Education, Dublin City University. Anna is editor of the peer-reviewed Reach Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland (reachjournal.ie).

159