

Teacher Leadership as a Driver of Transformational Change in Education at Vernacular (SJKT) School

Grace Anne, ¹, Zaheril Zainudin ²

^{1,2} Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies, City University, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Teacher leadership is increasingly recognized as central to advancing school improvement and student learning. Yet, limited research has explored its role in vernacular schools, particularly Tamil primary schools (SJKT) in Malaysia. This study investigates the leadership practices of teacher leaders in enhancing educational outcomes within SJKT schools in the Bangsar District, Kuala Lumpur. Guided by the constructivist paradigm, qualitative research design was employed to capture teachers lived experiences and perspectives. Using purposive sampling, five teacher leaders from five SJKT schools were selected based on their leadership responsibilities and recognition within their school communities. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, supported by NVivo software. Findings reveal that teacher leaders contribute significantly to curriculum development, peer mentoring, student engagement, and professional learning communities. They enact transformational leadership, particularly through idealized influence, inspiring colleagues and cultivating collaboration. However, challenges such as hierarchical structures, limited training, and workload pressures were identified as barriers to effective leadership. This study underscores the importance of supporting teacher leadership within vernacular schools. Policy interventions and professional development programs are recommended to strengthen leadership capacity, enhance school inclusivity, and sustain educational quality. By highlighting context-specific practices, the study contributes to the broader discourse on teacher leadership in Malaysia's diverse educational landscape.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 08 September 2025
Revised 30 September 2025
Accepted 04 October 2025

KEYWORDS

Teacher leadership;
transformational leadership;
SJKT school; primary school;
educational outcome

1. Introduction

Teacher leadership has emerged as a pivotal force in driving educational transformation, extending well beyond classroom instruction to encompass mentoring, curriculum innovation, and policy advocacy. Internationally, teacher leaders are recognized for their capacity to strengthen school culture, enhance student outcomes, and cultivate professional learning communities (Harris and Jones, 2022).

Within the Malaysian context, the role of teacher leadership holds particular significance in Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJKT) schools, which navigate the dual responsibility of meeting national curriculum standards while safeguarding Tamil cultural identity (Saad et al., 2025). These schools confront distinctive challenges, including socio-economic disparities, resource constraints, and multilingual demands (MOE, 2013). Such complexities necessitate teacher leaders to exercise agency, adaptability, and creativity in developing innovative pedagogical approaches that address both academic and cultural imperatives (Sivalingan, 2021).

Within this context, teacher leaders play a multifaceted role by mentoring peers, fostering professional collaboration, adapting curricula to diverse learner needs, and serving as critical intermediaries between classrooms and school management (York-Barr and Duke, 2004). Yet, their effectiveness is often constrained by systemic barriers such as rigid hierarchical structures, insufficient professional development, and excessive workloads (Nguyen et al., 2022).

Despite the growing global discourse on teacher leadership, empirical research within the context of SJKTs remains limited. This gap underscores the need for focused investigation into SJKT schools in the Bangsar District, offering context-specific insights that can strengthen leadership practices and advance equitable, sustainable educational transformation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Perspectives on Teacher Leadership

Over the past two decades, teacher leadership has become a prominent area of inquiry in international educational research. Conceptually, teacher leadership is defined as the process by which teachers, regardless of formal administrative positions, exert influence to improve teaching, learning, and school culture (York-Barr and Duke, 2004; Edoloverio et al., 2025). The movement toward distributed and shared leadership models reflect the limitations of principal-centered structures, which often concentrate authority in ways that can restrict innovation (Hallinger, 2003; Van Nuland, 2025). Instead, teacher leadership recognizes the collective expertise of educators, positioning them as agents of change (Sariakin et al., 2025).

Globally, teacher leadership has been associated with improved instructional practices and enhanced student learning outcomes. Research conducted in the United States demonstrates that teacher leaders contribute to raising instructional quality by mentoring colleagues, facilitating professional learning communities, and engaging in curriculum innovation (Adam, 2018). In the United Kingdom, the notion of “middle leadership” has been widely examined, with findings suggesting that teachers who lead teams or subject departments act as vital links between classroom practice and school-wide strategic goals (Harris and Jones, 2022). Similarly, studies in Australia emphasize teacher leadership as a driver of professional collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, particularly in schools facing contextual challenges (Crowther et al., 2004).

In Asian contexts, however, teacher leadership research is also expanding. In China, for example, where hierarchical structures dominate, studies indicate that empowering teachers with leadership responsibilities can improve teacher motivation and student engagement (Yu and Luen, 2025), though cultural traditions of authority and compliance remain obstacles (Li et al., 2025). In Singapore, teacher leadership is framed through a professional learning lens, with the Ministry of Education investing in capacity-building programs that encourage teachers to take

on leadership roles in curriculum design (Hairon, 2017) and school improvement (Liu, 2021). Collectively, global research underscores teacher leadership as a mechanism for building resilient school cultures, enhancing accountability, and promoting sustainable innovation.

2.2 Teacher Leadership in the Malaysian Context

In Malaysia, educational leadership research has traditionally focused on principals and administrators, reflecting a hierarchical organizational model (Mohd Tahir et al., 2021). However, recent scholarship acknowledges the growing importance of teacher leadership in advancing national education goals, particularly under the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013–2025), which emphasizes teacher empowerment (Mokhlis and Abdullah, 2025), collaborative professionalism (Ghazali et al., 2025), and school-based innovation (MOE, 2013).

Indeed, Malaysian studies reveal that teacher leadership is crucial for enhancing school improvement in diverse educational settings. For instance, Ismail et al. (2020) highlight how teacher leaders influence curriculum adaptation, peer mentoring, and professional development activities in urban and rural schools. Likewise, research by Ghazali et al. (2025) shows that teacher leaders support inclusive education practices, particularly in schools serving multilingual and multicultural populations. However, findings also suggest systemic barriers (Xueying et al., 2025) that limit teacher leadership in Malaysia, including rigid hierarchical structures (Yu and Luen, 2025), limited autonomy (Mohd Isa et al., 2021), and insufficient professional development opportunities (Salleh and Hatta, 2021).

Within professional learning contexts, nevertheless, teacher leadership has been identified as a key factor in cultivating teacher collaboration and continuous professional growth. A study by Nelikan and Yuet (2023) reports that teachers who engage in leadership practices foster stronger professional learning communities, contributing to improved instructional practices (Ishak et al., 2020) and student outcomes (Adams et al., 2024). Yet, as elsewhere, workload pressures (Kamaruzaman et al., 2020) and a culture of compliance (Mohd Razali and Abd Hamid, 2022) often diminish teachers' capacity (Ghazali et al., 2025) to undertake leadership roles in school.

Despite growing attention, thus, empirical research specifically examining teacher leadership in vernacular schools, particularly SKJT, remains limited. Such lack body of knowledge highlights the need to understand how broader theories of distributed leadership translate into the unique socio-cultural and linguistic realities of Malaysian vernacular schools.

2.3 Challenges in Vernacular (SJKT) Schools

Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJKT) schools form a distinct component of Malaysia's education system, providing Tamil-medium instruction while following the national curriculum (MOE, 2013). These schools carry the dual responsibility of meeting national educational standards and preserving Tamil cultural (Vasuhi and Rajasekar, 2024) and linguistic heritage (Ibrahim, 2018). Although it plays a vital role in sustaining cultural identity, SJKTs face persistent challenges that complicate the enactment of teacher leadership.

One of the foremost challenges is socio-economic disadvantages. A significant proportion of SJKT students come from low-income families (Kumar and A. Hamid, 2025), with many living in plantation communities (Marimothu et al., 2024) or poor urban settings (Thiruchelvan et al., 2020). Socio-economic disparities often correlate with issues such as lower attendance (Ibrahim, 2018), limited parental involvement (Abdullah Kamal et al., 2022), and lack of access to educational resources (Tharani et al., 2023). Teacher leadership in such contexts is therefore required to not only address academic needs but also provide holistic support for students' socio-emotional well-being (Rathakrishnan et al., 2019).

Resource constraints present another challenge. Many SJKT schools operate with smaller student populations (Ibrahim, 2018) and limited infrastructure (Maniam et al., 2024), often lacking specialized facilities such as science laboratories, libraries, and ICT resources (Kesavapany et al., 2008). This scarcity of resources restricts the ability of teacher leaders to implement innovative pedagogical practices or lead school-wide initiatives. Additionally, multilingual demands where students must navigate Tamil, Malay, and English place added pressure on teachers to

design adaptable curricula that foster both linguistic proficiency and academic achievement (Zarin et al., 2022; Kamrozzaman et al., 2023).

Teacher leaders in SJKTs also face institutional barriers, including hierarchical administrative structures (Thumbarayan et al., 2023) that restrict autonomy and innovation. Research suggests that the leadership culture in many vernacular schools remains principal-dominated, leaving limited space for teachers to exert influence (Raman and Sua, 2010; MOE, 2013). Furthermore, insufficient training and leadership development opportunities mean that many teachers are unprepared to assume leadership roles, despite the growing need for distributed leadership in these schools (Yu and Luen, 2025).

Ultimately, such challenges underscore the importance of context-sensitive teacher leadership in SJKTs. Teacher leaders in these schools must balance the demands of policy compliance, cultural preservation, and pedagogical innovation, often with minimal systemic support. Understanding such dynamics is essential for building leadership models that are both effective and culturally responsive.

2.4 Research Gaps and Justification of Study

Although global scholarship highlights the benefits of teacher leadership in improving schools, much of the literature remains concentrated in Western contexts, with limited exploration in culturally diverse, multilingual education systems such as Malaysia's. Within Malaysia, most research on teacher leadership has focused on mainstream national schools, leaving vernacular schools particularly SJKTs understudied (MOE, 2013; Selvadurai, 2015; Maniam et al., 2024). This creates a significant gap in understanding how teacher leadership is enacted in contexts shaped by socio-economic disadvantage, resource scarcity, and cultural-linguistic diversity.

Moreover, while policy frameworks such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013–2025) emphasize teacher empowerment, there is little empirical evidence on how these aspirations are realized in vernacular school settings. Studies that do address SJKTs primarily examine issues of equity, resource allocation, and cultural identity (MOE, 2013; Salleh and Woollard, 2025), but rarely focus on teacher leadership as a mechanism for school improvement. As a result, the lived realities of teacher leaders in SJKT schools remain poorly understood.

Thus, this study argues that the scarcity of research on teacher leadership in SJKTs is particularly problematic given the urgent challenges these schools face. By exploring teacher leadership practices in Bangsar District SJKTs, this study seeks to provide context-specific insights that contribute to both scholarly discourse and practical school improvement efforts. Such research not only enriches theoretical understandings of distributed leadership in multicultural contexts but also offers policy-relevant recommendations to strengthen leadership capacity in underserved educational environments.

2.5 Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the notion of distributed teacher leadership, which positions teachers as agents of change who extend their influence beyond classroom instruction to contribute to school-wide improvement (York-Barr and Duke, 2004). Drawing on global perspectives, national policy directions, and the unique challenges of SJKTs, the framework illustrates how teacher leadership operates at the intersection of three key domains: professional practice, school culture, and systemic context.

Teacher leadership is a multifaceted practice that significantly impacts educational systems across three key domains. In professional practice, teacher leaders mentor peers, adapt curriculum, and foster professional learning communities, thereby improving instructional quality and promoting pedagogical innovation (Wenner and Campbell, 2017). Within school culture, it builds inclusive and resilient environments through collaboration and shared decision-making, while balancing national curriculum demands with cultural identity preservation in contexts like SJKTs (Thiruchelvan et al., 2020). Finally, in the systemic context, its efforts are shaped by factors such as socio-economic challenges, resource availability, and governance structures, which present both opportunities and barriers to

effective leadership (Groenewald et al., 2024). Such interconnected domains highlight the complex and vital role of teacher leaders in modern education.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Teacher Leadership in SJKT Schools

Ultimately, the conceptual framework posits that transformational change in SJKT schools emerges when teacher leadership is effectively enacted across these three domains, despite systemic barriers. Teacher leaders act as mediators, bridging policy aspirations with classroom realities while promoting equity, innovation, and sustainability in education. This visual framework underscores the dynamic interplay between teacher leadership practices, school culture, and systemic conditions, positioning teacher leaders as catalysts for sustainable educational transformation in SJKT schools.

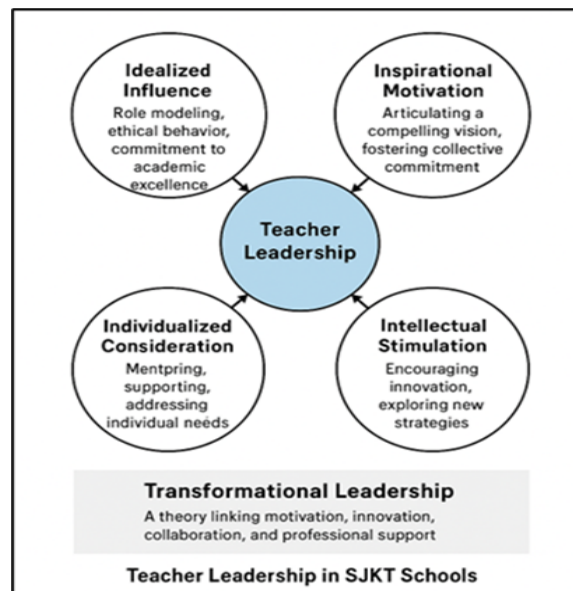


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework of Teacher Leadership in SJKT Schools

While the theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the theory of transformational leadership, which emphasizes the capacity of leaders to inspire, motivate, and guide others toward achieving shared goals (Winkler, 2010). Within the educational context, transformational leadership provides a useful lens for understanding how teacher leaders influence their colleagues, school culture, and student outcomes (Parai and Alias, 2025). Four core components (Zhao et al., 2025): idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are particularly relevant to teacher leadership in SJKT schools.

In real setting, teacher leaders act as transformational agents through four key behaviors. Firstly, idealized influence sees them as role models of integrity and professionalism, whose high standards and clear vision earn the respect of peers and encourage the adoption of innovative practices (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Winkler, 2010). In SJKTs, this balances academic rigor with cultural pride. Secondly, inspirational motivation enables them to articulate a compelling vision, uniting staff around shared goals like student performance and cultural heritage, thus building a resilient school culture. Thirdly, through intellectual stimulation, they encourage colleagues to question assumptions and embrace innovation, such as integrating digital tools or adapting multilingual strategies. Lastly, individualized consideration involves providing personalized support, mentorship, and professional development, strengthening teacher capacity and addressing unique challenges in multilingual, resource-constrained environments.

Ultimately, transformational leadership provides a robust theoretical foundation for this study by linking teacher leadership to the processes of motivation, innovation, collaboration, and professional support. When enacted effectively in SJKT schools, these four dimensions enable teacher leaders to transcend systemic barriers, foster equity and inclusivity, and drive sustainable educational transformation.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the leadership roles of teachers in enhancing educational outcomes within SJKT schools in the Bangsar District. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate as it captures the complexity of participants lived experiences and the contextual factors that shape their leadership practices. As Creswell (2014) notes, qualitative designs are particularly suitable for investigating complex social phenomena in natural settings, where the emphasis is on meaning rather than quantification.

Guided by the constructivist paradigm, the study recognized that knowledge is socially constructed through interactions, narratives, and shared experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Teacher leaders' perspectives were captured through semi-structured interviews, which allowed for both structured questioning and open-ended exploration. This design provided flexibility to probe emerging issues while ensuring coverage of key themes related to leadership roles, challenges, and educational outcomes.

The study targeted teacher leaders from SJKT schools in the Bangsar Pudu district, Kuala Lumpur. Out of 15 schools, five were purposively selected, and one teacher leader was chosen from each, forming a sample of five participants. Purposive sampling, widely used in qualitative inquiry, ensured that participants possessed relevant expertise and lived experiences (Palinkas et al., 2015). Inclusion criteria required at least three years of teaching experience, active engagement in leadership roles (e.g., curriculum planning, subject panel headship), and recognition within their school community. Teachers lacking leadership responsibilities or adequate experience were excluded. This approach ensured that the data reflected credible, contextually informed, and authentic insights into teacher leadership.

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol designed to capture multiple dimensions of teacher leadership. Developed using Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2001) Teacher Leadership Model and validated by two experts in educational leadership, the guide was aligned with the study objectives. It comprises four sections: Demographics (5 questions); Leadership practices (6 questions); Impact and outcomes (5 questions); Challenges and support structures (4 questions). To ensure reliability and validity, a pilot study was conducted with two teacher leaders outside the Bangsar District. Feedback confirmed the clarity, flow, and appropriateness of the

questions, leading to minor refinement. This process enhanced the instrument’s contextual relevance, robustness, and credibility.

Data collection spanned four weeks following approval from the District Education Office and participating schools. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in private settings, each lasting between 45–60 minutes and were audio-recorded with permission. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, verified through member checking, and anonymized using pseudonyms. All transcripts were securely stored, ensuring confidentiality, accuracy, and credibility throughout the research process.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, comprising: familiarization with the data; generating initial codes; developing preliminary themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the final report. Transcripts were repeatedly read, coded, and grouped into themes, which were refined for coherence and supported with participant quotations to enhance authenticity. NVivo software was used to manage, code, and visualize relationships within the data.

Additionally, a cross-case thematic analysis was conducted across the five SJKT schools to identify shared challenges and context-specific practices. This comparative approach highlighted recurring patterns and unique leadership strategies, thereby strengthening the credibility and transferability of the findings.

Trustworthiness was ensured using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four criteria: Credibility: achieved through prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking; Transferability: supported through rich contextual descriptions of schools and participants; Dependability: maintained through detailed audit trails of methodological decisions; and Confirmability: ensured through reflexive journaling to minimize researcher bias. Ethical safeguards included informed consent, the use of pseudonyms to protect participant identity, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. These measures upheld the study’s ethical integrity in line with qualitative research standards.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Profile of SJKT Teacher Leaders in Bangsar

Participant	School Name	Role	Teaching Experience	Subject Specialization	Other Responsibilities	Leadership Training Attended
1	SJKT Jalan Bangsar	Head of Department	<5 years	Tamil Language, Multiple Subjects	Panel Head, Coordinator, Mentor, ICT/Discipline	Yes (LEAD/MLT)
2	SJKT Ladang Bukit Jalil	Head of Department	<5 years	English, Multiple Subjects	Panel Head, Coordinator, Mentor	Yes (LEAD/MLT)
3	SJKT Vivekananda	Head of Department	5–10 years	Bahasa Malaysia, Multiple Subjects	Panel Head, Coordinator, Mentor	Yes (LEAD/MLT)
4	SJKT Sungai Besi	Subject Panel Head	>15 years	Mathematics, Science, Multiple Subjects	Panel Head, Coordinator, Mentor, ICT/Discipline	No

5	SJKT Cheras	Subject Panel Head	>15 years	English, Multiple Subjects	Panel Head, Mentor	No
---	-------------	--------------------	-----------	----------------------------	--------------------	----

Table 1 presents the demographic and professional characteristics of the five teacher leaders who participated in this study. All participants were drawn from different SJKT schools within the Bangsar District, representing a range of leadership roles, teaching experiences, and subject specializations. In terms of leadership roles, three participants served as Heads of Department (HODs) (Participants 1–3), while two held positions as Subject Panel Heads (Participants 4–5). This distribution highlights a balanced representation between senior and mid-level teacher leadership positions. Regarding teaching experience, two participants had less than five years of teaching experience (Participants 1 and 2), one had 5–10 years of experience (Participant 3), and two participants had more than 15 years of teaching experience (Participants 4 and 5). This variation illustrates a diverse range of professional maturity, from early-career leaders to highly experienced educators. In terms of subject specialization, participants demonstrated expertise across multiple disciplines, reflecting the multidimensional responsibilities often carried out by teacher leaders in SJKT schools.

The specializations included Tamil Language, English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mathematics, and Science, in addition to teaching multiple subjects. Such breadth of subject mastery underscores the versatility expected of teacher leaders in the context of vernacular schools. With respect to other responsibilities, all participants were actively engaged beyond classroom teaching. Common responsibilities included roles as Panel Heads, Coordinators, and Mentors. Some participants also undertook additional tasks such as managing ICT initiatives and overseeing discipline-related matters (Participants 1 and 4). This reflects the multifaceted leadership contributions of teacher leaders in supporting both academic and administrative functions. Concerning leadership training, three participants (Participants 1–3) reported attending structured programs such as LEAD or MLT training, while two participants (Participants 4 and 5) had not attended any formal leadership training. This indicates that although structured leadership development is accessible, participation is not yet universal across all teacher leaders. Overall, the participant profile suggests that teacher leaders in SJKT schools demonstrate a blend of early-career enthusiasm and veteran experience, coupled with multi-subject expertise and diverse leadership responsibilities. However, gaps remain in the equitable access to formal leadership training, which may influence leadership practices and capacity building within these schools.

4.2 Key Leadership Roles

Table 2: Leadership Roles Undertaken by Teachers

Leadership Domain	Description	Number of Participants (p=5)
Formal Roles	Head of Department / Subject Panel Head	5
Understanding of Roles	Clear understanding of leadership duties	4
Support for Colleagues/Students	Active mentoring and guidance	5
Fostering Collaboration	Encourage teamwork and staff cooperation	4
Initiating School Programmes	Lead/contribute to school-wide initiatives	4
Involvement in Decision-Making	Participating in school-level decisions	4
Mentorship Role	Mentor less experienced colleagues	4
Programme Coordination	Coordinate school-wide programmes	4
Leadership Skills Highlighted	Planning, communication, management	2 (open-ended)
Leadership Aspirations	Desire to grow in leadership	1 (open-ended)

Table 2 summarizes the leadership domains demonstrated by the five participating teacher leaders. All participants reported holding formal leadership positions, either as Heads of Department or Subject Panel Heads, indicating that leadership responsibilities are formally embedded within their professional roles. A strong emphasis was placed on support for colleagues and students, with all five participants highlighting active mentoring and guidance as a central part of their leadership practice. Similarly, four participants described their role as fostering

collaboration among staff, underscoring the importance of teamwork in sustaining effective school culture. Leadership responsibilities extended beyond interpersonal support to include school-wide initiatives and decision-making. Four participants reported leading or contributing to school programmes, coordinating activities, and participating in school-level decisions.

This suggests that teacher leaders are not only instructional mentors but also key actors in institutional governance and programmed management. The findings also highlight the mentorship dimension of leadership, with four participants explicitly stating that they mentor less experienced colleagues. This reflects the developmental role teacher leaders play in building leadership capacity within the school system. When asked to articulate the specific leadership skills they considered important, only two participants responded, emphasizing planning, communication, and management. Similarly, leadership aspirations were mentioned by only one participant, who expressed a desire for further growth in leadership. These open-ended responses, while limited, suggest that while teacher leaders perform extensive leadership functions, their self-reflection on leadership skills and future aspirations may be less pronounced. Overall, the findings demonstrate that teacher leaders in SJKT schools undertake a wide spectrum of leadership responsibilities that encompass formal roles, mentoring, collaboration, and institutional participation. However, the relatively lower reporting of leadership skills and aspirations indicates a possible need for structured professional reflection and targeted leadership development programs.

4.3 Influence on Students and School Management

Table 3: Influence of Teacher Leadership

Area of Influence	Description	Number of Participants (p=5)
Student Achievement	Improved student academic outcomes	4
Student Engagement	Enhanced motivation and self-discipline	4
School Environment	Positive changes in school culture and communication	4
Student Behaviour	Improved behaviour and discipline	4
Leadership Success Stories	Shared specific programme or student success	2 (qualitative)
Policy Contribution	Involved in policy and academic planning	4

Table 3 illustrates the areas where teacher leadership was perceived to exert influence within SJKT schools. The findings indicate that teacher leaders play a significant role in shaping both student outcomes and the broader school environment. In terms of student achievement, four out of five participants reported that their leadership efforts contributed to improved academic outcomes, suggesting a direct link between teacher leadership and instructional effectiveness. Similarly, student engagement was highlighted by four participants, who observed enhanced motivation, self-discipline, and active participation in learning activities. Teacher leadership also extended to the school environment, with four participants noting improvements in school culture, collegial communication, and overall collaboration. Parallel to this, four participants emphasized positive changes in student behavior, particularly in terms of discipline and classroom conduct. These findings reinforce the notion that teacher leadership not only impacts academic performance but also nurtures a holistic learning environment. Two participants shared leadership success stories in qualitative form, citing specific programmes or individual student achievements as evidence of the tangible impact of their leadership practices. Although fewer in number, these narratives provide valuable contextual insights into how teacher leadership translates into visible outcomes. Finally, four participants reported involvement in policy contribution, particularly in areas of academic planning and school-level policy formulation. This underscores the broader institutional influence of teacher leaders, highlighting their role not only as instructional leaders but also as contributors to school governance.

Taken together, the findings suggest that teacher leadership in SJKT schools is multi-dimensional, positively influencing student learning, school culture, behavioural norms, and policy development. While quantitative data

reveal a strong pattern of influence across most domains, the qualitative success stories enrich the analysis by demonstrating practical illustrations of leadership in action.

4.4 Challenges of Teacher Leadership

Table 4: Challenges and Suggested Solutions

Challenge	Details	Suggested Solutions
Work-Life Balance	Lack of time balancing teaching and leadership (3/5)	Allocate dedicated leadership time; time-management training
Lack of Tailored Training	Training lacks focus on SJKT needs	Develop SJKT-specific training programmes
Need for Mentorship	Desire for structured guidance (4/5)	Implement mentoring and coaching systems
Insufficient Resources/Funding	Limited resources hinder initiatives (3/5)	Increase funding and resource allocation
Lack of Recognition	Contributions not formally acknowledged (3/5)	Create recognition systems
Bureaucratic Barriers	Administrative delays obstruct initiatives	Streamline approval processes
Unclear Policy Direction	Lack of clear frameworks (3/5)	Establish defined leadership policies
Sustained Motivation	High motivation despite challenges (4/5)	Provide systemic support and affirm contributions

Table 4 highlights the key challenges faced by teacher leaders in SJKT schools and the corresponding solutions proposed by participants. The findings demonstrate that while teacher leaders remain highly motivated, they encounter structural, institutional, and professional barriers that impact their leadership effectiveness. One prominent challenge identified was work–life balance, with three out of five participants indicating difficulties in managing teaching responsibilities alongside leadership duties. Suggested solutions included allocating dedicated leadership time within teachers’ schedules and providing time-management training to ease workload pressures. A recurring issue concerned the lack of tailored leadership training, as participants noted that existing programmes were not sufficiently adapted to the unique context and needs of SJKT schools. The recommended solution was to develop SJKT-specific training programmes, ensuring greater contextual relevance and applicability. The need for mentorship was strongly emphasized, with four participants expressing a desire for structured guidance in their leadership journey. Proposed solutions involved the implementation of formal mentoring and coaching systems to support leadership development and succession planning. Resource-related barriers were also noted. Three participants highlighted insufficient resources and funding as a significant obstacle to implementing initiatives. The suggested solution was to increase funding and resource allocation, ensuring sustainability of school programmes.

Similarly, lack of recognition was cited by three participants, with recommendations for formal recognition systems to acknowledge the contributions of teacher leaders. Administrative and policy-related challenges further constrained leadership practices. Bureaucratic barriers, such as administrative delays, were perceived as obstructing initiatives, with participants recommending streamlined approval processes. In addition, three participants pointed to unclear policy direction, suggesting the need for defined leadership frameworks to provide clarity and consistency. Despite these challenges, teacher leaders demonstrated sustained motivation, with four participants highlighting their strong commitment to leadership roles. The solution proposed was to provide systemic support and affirmation, thereby reinforcing intrinsic motivation while addressing structural barriers. In sum, the challenges and solutions identified reflect the dual reality of teacher leadership in SJKT schools: while teacher leaders exhibit resilience and commitment, systemic reforms in training, policy, recognition, and resource allocation are necessary to maximize their leadership impact.

4.5 Additional Insights

Table 5: Open-Ended Responses

Theme	Details	Recommendation
Misalignment of Role/Expertise	Assigned to lead panels outside area of specialization	Align leadership roles with subject expertise
Lack of Administrative Support	Difficulty enforcing leadership without management backing	Strengthening management support
Insufficient Time	Struggles balancing teaching and leadership responsibilities	Allocate dedicated leadership hours
Need for Targeted Development	Absence of SJKT-specific professional training	Provide tailored mentoring and coaching
Limited Resources	Inadequate materials and funding	Improve access to resources
Lack of Policies/Recognition	Ambiguous frameworks reduce motivation	Establish policies and recognition systems

Table 5 presents themes emerging from participants' open-ended responses, which provide nuanced insights into the underlying issues affecting teacher leadership in SJKT schools. The responses reveal systemic challenges related to leadership alignment, institutional support, and professional development, alongside practical recommendations to strengthen teacher leadership practices. One recurring concern was the misalignment of roles and expertise, where participants reported being assigned to lead panels outside their area of specialization. Such mismatches were perceived to limit effectiveness and confidence in leadership roles. The suggested solution was to align leadership responsibilities more closely with subject expertise, ensuring leaders can leverage their professional strengths. Another major theme was the lack of administrative support. Participants noted difficulties in exercising leadership authority when management backing was insufficient. They emphasized the need for stronger management support structures to legitimize and reinforce teacher leadership. Time-related constraints also emerged prominently, with participants citing insufficient time to balance classroom teaching and leadership duties.

To address this, they recommended allocating dedicated leadership hours, reducing the strain of overlapping responsibilities. The need for targeted professional development was also highlighted, particularly the absence of SJKT-specific training programmes. Participants recommended the introduction of tailored mentoring and coaching systems, which would reflect the cultural and contextual realities of vernacular schools. Resource-related barriers were further emphasized, as participants described limited resources and funding as impediments to effective leadership. The proposed solution was to improve access to materials and increase funding allocations, ensuring initiatives are sustainable. Finally, participants pointed to unclear policies and lack of recognition as factors diminishing motivation. Ambiguous leadership frameworks and limited acknowledgment of contributions were seen as discouraging. To overcome this, participants suggested the establishment of clear leadership policies and formal recognition systems. Overall, the open-ended responses highlight that while teacher leaders in SJKT schools demonstrate commitment, their effectiveness is constrained by role misalignment, structural barriers, and systemic gaps. Addressing these through targeted reforms in policy, support, training, and recognition would not only enhance leadership performance but also sustain long-term motivation and institutional impact.

5. Discussion

5.1 RQ1: What are the key leadership roles undertaken by teachers in SJKT schools?

The evidence demonstrates that teachers in SJKT schools perform diverse leadership roles, both formal (Head of Department, Subject Panel Head) and informal (peer mentoring, programme coordination, ICT/discipline management). These findings align with distributed leadership theory, which emphasizes that leadership is not restricted to administrators but shared across organizational levels (Muijs et al., 2023). By mentoring colleagues,

initiating school programmes, and participating in decision-making, teacher leaders act as intermediaries between policy and practice, shaping the school's strategic direction. Importantly, these roles reflect not only administrative functions but also moral leadership, as teacher leaders balance academic excellence with the preservation of Tamil cultural identity.

5.2 RQ2: How does teacher leadership influence student performance and school management?

The study highlights clear evidence that teacher leadership positively affects student outcomes. Teacher leaders enhanced student achievement, motivation, discipline, and engagement, supporting a culture of accountability and collaboration. These findings echo international scholarship asserting that empowering teachers as leaders elevates instructional quality and strengthens professional learning communities (Harris and Jones, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2023). Moreover, participants reported that leadership extended beyond classrooms, influencing school-level planning, communication, and policy formulation. Such results underscore the dual impact of teacher leadership: fostering individual student growth while driving collective organizational improvement.

5.3 RQ3: What challenges do teacher leaders face, and how can they be addressed?

Despite its benefits, teacher leadership in SJKT schools is constrained by systemic and contextual challenges. Teachers reported difficulties in balancing teaching with leadership duties, insufficient leadership training tailored to SJKT needs, limited resources, and lack of recognition. These challenges mirror findings in other multilingual, resource-constrained contexts (Nguyen et al., 2022). Importantly, the study revealed that teacher leaders often remained motivated despite these barriers, demonstrating resilience and commitment. Addressing these issues requires systemic reforms, including time allocation for leadership duties, targeted SJKT-specific professional development, structured mentoring and recognition systems, and streamlined administrative processes. Such interventions would not only reduce leadership fatigue but also sustain long-term school improvement.

6. Recommendations

This study shows that teacher leadership in SJKT schools is multifaceted and vital for sustainable improvement, extending beyond classroom teaching to encompass mentoring, collaboration, programme coordination, and policy shaping. Teacher leadership was found to significantly enhance student learning, engagement, and school culture, demonstrating its essential role in educational transformation. At the same time, several barriers were identified, including time constraints, limited training opportunities, inadequate resources, and lack of recognition, all of which hinder leadership effectiveness. To address these challenges, the proposed S.T.E.P.S. Model provides a structured framework for strengthening teacher leadership. The model emphasizes:

S – Structured Organization: Establishing clear leadership pathways and defined responsibilities.

T – Targeted Professional Development: Offering context-specific training, mentoring, and coaching for SJKT leaders.

E – Empowered Roles: Aligning leadership duties with subject expertise and granting authority to implement initiatives.

P – Platforms for Collaboration: Creating opportunities for teamwork, shared decision-making, and peer support.

S – Student-Centered Outcomes: Ensuring leadership efforts remain focused on improving student achievement, engagement, and well-being.

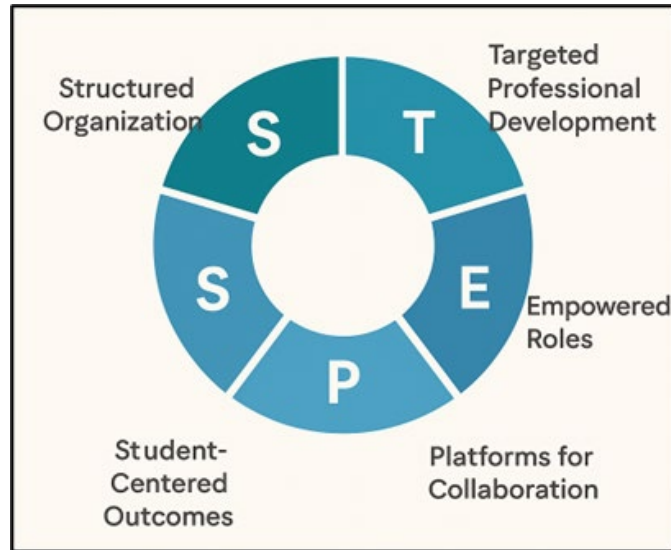


Figure 3: The S.T.E.P.S. Model for Teacher Leadership

7. Limitations

Although this study provides important insights into teacher leadership practices in Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil (SJKT) schools in the Bangsar District, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with a relatively small sample size of five teacher leaders drawn from only five SJKTs within a single district. While the purposive sampling ensured participants had relevant leadership experience, the limited scope restricts the generalizability of findings to other vernacular schools across Malaysia. Leadership practices in rural or estate-based SJKTs, for example, may differ significantly due to contextual variations in socio-economic conditions, resource availability, and school culture.

Second, the study relied exclusively on qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews. While this design allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, the data is based on self-reported accounts, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, selective memory, or participants' interpretations of their roles. The absence of triangulation with classroom observations, document analysis, or student performance data limits the capacity to fully validate the claims made by participants.

Third, the study examined teacher leadership primarily through the perspectives of teacher leaders themselves. Voices of other stakeholders such as principals, students, parents, or policymakers—were not included. This single-perspective approach narrows the scope of analysis and may not fully capture how teacher leadership is perceived, supported, or constrained within the broader school community.

Fourth, contextual factors such as government policy changes, leadership training initiatives, and systemic reforms within the Malaysian education system may influence teacher leadership practices over time. Given the cross-sectional nature of this study, the findings represent a snapshot rather than longitudinal evidence of how teacher leadership evolves in response to shifting educational priorities.

Finally, while this study applied transformational and distributed leadership frameworks, these theoretical lenses may not fully capture the cultural specificities of SJKT schools, particularly the intersections of multilingualism, cultural identity preservation, and socio-economic challenges. Future research could benefit from integrating culturally responsive leadership theories or comparative studies across vernacular and national schools to provide a more nuanced understanding.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable, context-specific insights into the leadership roles, challenges, and contributions of teacher leaders in SJKT schools. It highlights areas where further research and policy attention are needed to strengthen leadership capacity in vernacular school contexts.

8. Conclusion And Implications

This study investigated the leadership roles, influence, challenges, and aspirations of teacher leaders in SJKT schools in the Bangsar District. The findings revealed that teacher leaders hold formal positions such as Heads of Department and Subject Panel Heads, while also engaging in mentorship, programme coordination, fostering collaboration, and contributing to policy decisions. Their leadership positively influenced student achievement, engagement, behavior, and school culture, reinforcing their role as key agents of academic and institutional improvement. Nonetheless, challenges such as role misalignment, limited resources, lack of tailored training, insufficient recognition, and bureaucratic barriers were found to constrain their leadership effectiveness, despite their demonstrated commitment and resilience.

The implications of these findings highlight the need for systemic reforms to strengthen teacher leadership in SJKT schools. Clear leadership policies and pathways should be established to reduce role ambiguity and align responsibilities with subject expertise. Professional development initiatives tailored to the SJKT context, supported by structured mentorship and coaching, would build leadership capacity and ensure succession planning. School management practices must provide stronger administrative support, allocate dedicated leadership hours, and streamline approval processes to help leaders balance teaching with leadership duties. In addition, equitable resource allocation and formal recognition mechanisms are critical for sustaining motivation and affirming contributions.

In the long run, the study suggests that empowering teacher leaders requires an integrated approach that combines policy clarity, contextualized training, administrative backing, resource provision, and recognition systems. Addressing these areas will enable teacher leaders to maximize their impact as effective change agents, ultimately enhancing both student learning and institutional development in SJKT schools. Future studies should expand on these insights through longitudinal, comparative, intervention-based studies as well as beyond Bangsar District, ensuring that teacher leadership continues to act as a catalyst for educational transformation in Malaysia and beyond.

Declarations

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by educational institutions. The authors gratefully acknowledge the generous support and resources provided, which made this study possible.

Competing Interests

None.

Ethical Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with educational research ethical guidelines. All respondents were clearly informed about the purpose, procedures, and implications of the study. Written consent was obtained from the school as well as from the study participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Data confidentiality was fully assured, with respondent information kept strictly confidential and used solely for academic purposes. No risks or harm were imposed on respondents throughout the research process.

Author's Contribution

Author¹: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft

Author²: Methodology, Resources, Software, Writing – review and editing

Data availability

The data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, as detailed in the Method section of this study. The dataset is not publicly available but can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

- Abdullah Kamal, S. S. L., Masnan, A. H., & Hashim, N. H. (2022). Parental involvement in young children's education in Malaysia: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(3), 319-341. DOI: 10.26803/ijlter.21.3.17
- Adams, D. (2018). Teacher leadership: Going beyond classroom. *International Online Journal of Educational Leadership*, 2(1), 1-3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323116238_Teacher_Leadership_Going_Beyond_Classroom
- Adams, D., Moosa, V., Shareefa, M., Mohamed, A., & Tan, K. L. (2024). Assessing inclusive school leadership practices in Malaysia: Instrument adaptation and validation. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 72(2), 263–281. DOI: 10.1080/1034912X.2024.2354895
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership (2nd ed.)*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crowther, F., Kaagan, S., Ferguson, M., & Hann, L. (2004). Developing teacher leaders: How teacher leadership enhances school success. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 42(4). DOI: 10.1108/09578230410544107
- Edoloverio, E., Torres, J., Mira, J., Pajares, R., & Somoza, L. (2025). A global perspective on educational leadership and management beyond the western lens. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation Sustainability and Excellence*, 1(12), 71-80. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14275242
- Ghazali, M., Ahmad, A., & Mansor, A. (2025). Teacher leadership influencing student leadership: A study in Malaysian fully residential schools. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, 7(11), 1-9. DOI: 10.31893/multiscience.2025533
- Groenewald, E., Groenewald, C. A., Dela Cruz, R. A., Uy, F., Kilag, O. K., & Villaver, M. (2024). Navigating educational leadership: Challenges, styles, and impacts - A systematic review. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence*, 1(2), 262-267. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378514907_Navigating_Educational_Leadership_Challenges_Styles_and_Impacts_-_A_Systematic_Review
- Hairon, S. (2017). Teacher leadership in Singapore: The next wave of effective leadership. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 2(2), 170-194. DOI: 10.30828/real/2017.2.3
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329-352. DOI: 10.1080/0305764032000122005
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2022). Teacher leadership and educational change: Mobilising teachers as agents. *School Leadership & Management*, 42(3), 220–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2021.2009235>
- Harris, A., Jones, M., & Ismail, N. (2022). Distributed leadership: taking a retrospective and contemporary view of the evidence base. *School Leadership & Management*, 42(2), 1-19. DOI: 10.1080/13632434.2022.21096
- Ibrahim, N. (2018). A case on Tamil education in Malaysia: Is Tamil education being sidelined? *SHS Web of Conferences*, 53(9), 1-11. DOI: 10.1051/shsconf/20185303006.
- Ishak, R., Ismail, K., & Kamaruddin, S. (2020). Professional learning communities in Malaysian schools: A contemporary literature review. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(4), 1535-1541. DOI: 10.13189/ujer.2020.080447

- Ismail, S. N., Muhammad, S., Omar, M. N., & Raman, A. (2020). The great challenge of Malaysian school leaders' instructional leadership: Can it affect teachers' functional competency across 21st century education? *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(6), 2436-2443. DOI: 10.13189/ujer.2020.080627
- Kamaruzaman, N. L., Musa, K., & Hashim, Z. (2020). Issues and challenges in teacher leadership. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(10), 228 – 237. DOI: 10.47405/mjssh.v5i10.517
- Kamrozzaman, N. A., Rahim, R. M. A. A., Thambusamy, M., Elias, S., & Taha, N. (2023). Leadership behavior on teacher's job satisfaction at Tamil schools in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(2), 1097-1112. DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i2/16385
- Katzenmayer, M. & Moller, G. (2001). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Helping teachers develop as leaders*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Kesavapany, K., Mani, A., & Ramasamy, P. (2008). *Rising India and Indian communities in East Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Kumar, S. & A. Hamid, A. H. (2025). The level of legal literacy in teacher education and its relationship with discipline management in SJKT schools in the Hilir Perak District. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 14(1), 1254-1271. DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i1/24714
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, 28(1), 27-42. DOI: 10.1080/13632430701800060.
- Li, C., Law, E. H.-F., Huang, Y., & Ding, K. (2025). Balancing tradition, reform, and constraints: A study of principal leadership practices in Chinese primary schools. *Education Sciences*, 15(8), 1-23. DOI: 10.3390/educsci15080988
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Liu, W. C. (2021). *Singapore's approach to developing teachers: Hindsight, insight, and foresight*. Singapore: Taylor & Francis.
- Maniam, V., Bleeze, R., & Harrington, I. (2024). Tamil Schools in the Federated Malay States under British Colonial Rule 1895-1941. *Social and Education History*, 10, 1-18. DOI: 10.17583/hse.14966.
- Marimothu, G., Kamaruddin, R., & Abdullah, M. A. R. (2024). Elements of attitude and motivation of SJKT students at form 1 in Malay Language Mastery. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(5), 1729-1740. DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i5/21723.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). (2013). *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE).
- Mohd Isa, A., Mydin, A. A., & Abdullah, A. (2021). Road to school transformation 2025: A systematic literature review on teacher autonomy in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 10(3), 35-45. DOI: 10.6007/IJARPED/v10-i3/10710.
- Mohd Razali, M. N. & Abd Hamid, A. H. (2022). Culturally responsive leadership in Malaysian small schools context: A preliminary survey. *Akademika*, 92(Special Edition), 71-80. DOI: 10.17576/akad-2022-92IK1-06
- Mohd Tahir, L., Samah, N. A., Mohd Anis, S. N., & Ali, M. F., (2021). Implementing teacher leadership in Malaysian schools: Exploring secondary principals' perspectives. *Management in Education*, 38(1), 5-21. DOI: 10.1177/08920206211053099
- Mokhlis, S. & Abdullah, A. H. (2025). The impact of teacher empowerment on schools' innovation climate. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 19(1), 322-329. DOI: 10.11591/edulearn.v19i1.21633
- Muijs, D., Reynolds, D., & Kyriakides, L. (2015). The scientific properties of teacher effects/effective teaching processes. In D. Reynolds & S. R. Y. Loh (Eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Educational Effectiveness and Improvement* (pp. 24). New York: Routledge.
- Nelikan, P. & Yuet, F. (2023). Professional learning community as a predictable factor of teacher leadership competency among SJKT Teachers, TS25. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 12(3). DOI: 10.6007/IJARPED/v12-i3/19224
- Nguyen, C., Huynh, T., & Hai Tran, N. (2022). Overcoming contextual constraints: implementing classroom pedagogical innovation through teacher leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 28(1), 1-15. DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2021.2013543

- Palinkas, L., Horwitz, S., Green, C., Wisdom, J., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2013). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 1-13. DOI: 10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y
- Parai, J. & Alias, B. (2025). Principals' transformational leadership practices and their relationship with teachers blended teaching in rural schools. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 14(1), 1037-1050. DOI: 10.6007/IJARPEd/v14-i1/24711
- Raman, S. & Sua, T. (2010). Ethnic segregation in Malaysia's education system: Enrolment choices, preferential policies and desegregation. *Paedagogica Historica*, 46, 117-31. DOI: 10.1080/00309230903528496.
- Rathakrishnan, B., Sanu, M. E., George, S., Koay, T., Yahaya, A., Bikar Singh, S. S., Singh, B., & Kamaluddin, M. (2019). Emotional intelligence and psychological well-being of rural school students in Malaysia. *EC Psychology and Psychiatry*, 8(6), 440-444. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341277551_Emotional_Intelligence_and_Psychological_Well-Being_of_Rural_School_Students_in_Malaysia/link/5eb7c1584585152169c1446c/download?_tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIiwicGFnZSI6InB1YmxpY2F0aW9uIn19
- Saad, N., Sankaran, S., & Ramanathan, R. (2025). the influence of transformational leadership of headmasters on teacher innovation behavior at Tamil primary schools in the Kuala Muda Yan district, Kedah. *International Journal of Modern Trends in Social Sciences*, 8(29), 45-55. DOI: 10.35631/IJMTSS.829004
- Salleh, M. & Hatta, M. (2019). Best practices for promoting teachers' professional development in Malaysia. *UMT Education Review*, 2(2). 01-26. DOI: 10.32350/uer.22.01
- Salleh, R. & Woollard, J. (2025). Inclusive education: Equality and equity (Teachers' views about inclusive education in Malaysia's primary schools). *Jurnal Pendidikan Bitara*, 12(Special Issue), 72-83. DOI: 10.37134/bitara.vol12.sp.8.2019.
- Sariakin, S., Yeni. M., Usman, M. B., Mare, A. S., Munzir, M., & Saleh, M. (2025). Fostering a productive educational environment: The roles of leadership, management practices, and teacher motivation. *Frontiers in Education*, 2, 1-12. DOI: 10.3389/feduc.2025.1499064
- Selvadurai, S., Liu, O. P., Mohd Radzi, M., Hoon, O. P., Tee, O. P., & Saibeh, B. (2015). Debating education for nation building in Malaysia: National school persistence or vernacular school resistance? *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 11(3), 14-23. <https://journalarticle.ukm.my/9767/1/2x.geografia-dec15-siva-bi-edam1.pdf>
- Sivalingam, A. D. (2021). History of Malaysian Education System: Year 1824 to 2025. *Social Sciences Education eJournal*, 4(7), 1-12. <http://eprints.iab.edu.my/v2/1117/1/History%20of%20Malaysian%20Education%20System1824%20to%202025.pdf>
- Tharani, L., Ong, Z., Nik, M. F., Chan, D. Z., & Majid, H. (2023). Barriers and facilitators to education access for marginalized non-citizen children in Malaysia: A qualitative study. *PLOS ONE*, 18(6), 1-24. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0286793.
- Thiruchelvan, K., Kadir, S. Basri, R., & Mohd Ayub, A. F. (2020). Influence of school culture and climate in Tamil schools, Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(5), 1-12. DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v10-i5/7167.
- Thumbarayan, K., Mohd Kamaruzaman, F., & Omar, M. (2023). Issues and challenges of integrating technology in teaching and learning among teachers in national type Tamil school (NTTS). *International Journal of Education*, 15(4), 1-17. DOI: 10.5296/ije.v15i4.21535.
- Van Nuland, S. (2025). A world assembly of teacher educators: Global perspectives from ICET. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 51(3), 413-416. DOI: 10.1080/02607476.2025.2479300
- Vasuhi, R. & Rajasekar, F. (2024). The role of Tamil in education: A comprehensive analysis. *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, 11(1), 235-238. DOI: 10.34293/sijash.v11i1S1.7754
- 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. DOI: 10.3102/0034654316653478
- Winkler, I. (2010). *Contemporary leadership theories: Enhancing the understanding of the complexity, subjectivity and dynamic of leadership*. Berlin: Physica-Verlag.
- Xueying, Y., Arshad, M. A., & Lihua, H. (2025). Teacher e-leadership in the digital age: A systematic review of research and practice. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 15(5), 1118-1130. DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i5/25494

- York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(3), 255-316. DOI: 10.3102/00346543074003255
- Yu, L., & Luen, L. (2025). Teacher leadership development in exam-oriented education under multicultural contexts: A comparative study between China and Malaysia with systemic implications. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 14(3), 1340-1353. DOI: 10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i3/26214
- Zarin, N., Kaur, K., Ismail, S., Choong, Y., & Siong, C. (2022). A call for a new stress index for Malaysian teachers: A systematic review of studies of stress among teachers in Malaysia. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(2), 202-214. DOI: 10.5430/wjel.v12n2p202.
- Zhao, Z., Saidin, K., & Jaafar, F. (2025). The influence of transformational leadership on teacher job performance. *Indian Journal of Information Sources and Services*, 15(1), 332-344. DOI: 10.51983/ijss-2025.IJSS.15.1.43.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of RISE and/or the editor(s). RISE and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.