

Torch Bearer, Weary Juggler, and Heckler: Representations of Teacher Leadership

Le porteur de flambeau, le jongleur épuisé et le chahuteur : représentations du leadership enseignant

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Article abstract

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TORCH BEARER, WEARY JUGGLER, AND HECKLER: REPRESENTATIONS OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT. This paper is drawn from a mixed methods study, which examined the leadership practices of teachers in the Level Three Classroom Teachers program in Western Australia. Three archetypal characters, the Torch Bearer, Weary Juggler, and Heckler, are used to represent the diverse leadership experiences of these “expert” teachers and the extent to which they embraced or resisted policy constructions of teacher leadership. Narrative analysis and the construction of these representations provided the means of inserting teachers’ voices and problematizing dominant discourses on teacher leadership in a way that invites policymakers to reconsider the larger narrative of teacher leadership, along with the personal dimension of leadership work.

LE PORTEUR DE FLAMBEAU, LE JONGLEUR ÉPUIÉ ET LE CHAHUTEUR :
REPRÉSENTATIONS DU LEADERSHIP ENSEIGNANT

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article présente des données recueillies grâce à une variété de méthodes dans le cadre d’une recherche explorant les pratiques de leadership d’enseignants oeuvrant en classes Level Three, en Australie occidentale. Trois archétypes sont utilisés pour représenter les différentes expériences de leadership de ces enseignants « experts » et la manière dont ils se sont engagés ou ont résisté au développement de politiques en leadership enseignant : le Porteur de flambeau (Torch Bearer), le Jongleur épuisé (Weary Juggler) et le Chahuteur (Heckler). L’analyse narrative et l’élaboration de ces représentations ont permis d’intégrer les points de vue des enseignants et de faire ressortir les problématiques présentes dans les discours dominants sur le leadership enseignant. Par conséquent, les responsables de l’élaboration de politiques sont invités à reconsidérer leur conception globale du leadership enseignant, ainsi que la dimension personnelle des efforts de leadership.

Teacher leadership is not a new idea, evidenced by the discourse of teacher leadership, which can be traced back to the 1970s (Frost, 2008; Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Over the past decade, teacher leadership in the Australian context has been increasingly linked to the transformation of schools and the

notion of teachers working collaboratively with administrators to enact change (Andrews, 2008; Crowther, 2010; Dempster, Lovett, & Fluckiger, 2011). The oft-quoted metaphor of the “sleeping giant” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 2) represents the unrealized potential of teachers as leaders and suggests a story waiting to be told. This article examines teacher leadership in the context of The Level Three Classroom Teacher program (L3CT) in Western Australian government schools (DOE)¹ and offers a partial explanation as to why the potential of teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001) may yet to be fully realized.

The study set out to understand the nature of L3CT teacher leadership and to identify the factors that might engender or impede teacher leadership. The researchers were interested in the binary of the expectations of leadership and the day-to-day leadership practices of the teachers in this program. This article explores the ways in which L3CT teachers responded to policy, as well as the contextual factors including levels of administrator support (Dawson, 2011), acknowledgement by peers (Cohen, 2010) and how the wider discourses of quality teaching (Gale, 2006; Sachs, 2005; Thomas 2005) shaped their leadership experience.

Three representative characters, the Torchbearer, Weary Juggler, and Heckler are used to present the varying leadership experiences of the L3CTs. The characters provided a means to insert teachers’ voices into the study and offer a more nuanced explanation of the enactment of teacher leadership, including the contextual factors pertaining to school context and teacher expectations of leadership. The characters also represent the degrees to which Level Three Classroom Teachers embraced or resisted policy constructions of teacher leadership. The construction of these representations allows for the presentation of both shared and diverse experiences.

We include a discussion of how narrative inquiry emerged as a powerful tool to analyze and represent qualitative data, and the rich experiences of the teacher leader. The use of narrative as a sense-making device (Geiger, 2010) was unexpected, as the study was not initially conceived as narrative research but can be explained in part by the researchers’ belief in the centrality of story or the notion that we lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this way, we also highlight the value of being open to adjusting methodological choices to coherently support the research aims and research question (Howe & Eisenhardt, 1990; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As is common in much education literature (Creswell, 2008; Earthy & Cronin, 2008; Rooney, Lawler & Rohan, 2016), in this study, the terms story and narrative are used interchangeably.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The term teacher leadership or teacher leader is generic and does not have a fixed meaning. Descriptors such as leadership, leading, and leader are ubiquitous terms (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 331). Teacher leadership can describe teachers working as experts, leading peers to implement pedagogical change and/or teachers working with school administrators to design and implement policies. Teacher leaders do not necessarily have formal leadership positions (Donaldson, 2007); however, the teachers in this study have been formally recognized as leaders.

The study reported here determined, based on recent scholarship, that teacher leadership was fundamentally a shifting of the paradigm of school leadership (Crowther, 2010; Dawson, 2011; Dempster, Lovett & Fluckiger, 2011), where teachers collaborated with administrators to shape school policy and practices (Andrews, 2008). Working beyond the confines of their classroom, teacher leaders can be supported by both explicit frameworks (Dawson, 2011) and leadership development that acknowledges the micro-politics of school leadership (Frost & Harris, 2003). Understanding the nature of L3CT teacher leadership was crucial to determining the extent to which the L3CT role could be deemed genuine leadership, that is, participation in school decision making and processes, as opposed to additional duties or an intensification of a teacher's workload (Blackmore, 1999; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Nichols & Parson, 2011).

Teacher leadership also needs to be understood as a product of particular discourses with respect to notions of creating successful schools (Connell, 2009; Cranston, 2000; Gale, 2006). The discourse encompasses debate on the impact of creating categories of teachers, where some are awarded for excellence (Mackenzie, 2007) and the attendant emotions attached to teachers' work (Hargreaves, 2001). Consequently, the narrative of teacher leadership is concerned with teacher status, empowerment, collegiality, and the motivation to lead. The dichotomy or tension between these discourses was fundamental to understanding the nature and scope of L3CT teacher leadership. Therefore, although the study uncovered daily leadership practices, the larger narrative of teacher leadership as a strategy for enhancing teacher status and satisfaction, while ensuring teacher quality, was also interrogated.

The Level Three Classroom Teacher program

At the beginning of the research journey, a decision was made to examine the leadership practices of L3CT in DoE schools. Whilst this is a localized and specific leadership program, it is not unlike other initiatives nationally and internationally that reward quality teaching (see Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014; Iowa Department of Education, 2017). Introduced in 1997 as part of an enterprise bargaining agreement to recognize and reward outstanding teachers, the L3CT program is a merit select position.

The initiative provides career progression and leadership roles for classroom teachers and aims to attract and retain quality teachers in DoE schools. A formalized program, the initiative explicitly targets leadership and requires teachers to work collaboratively as leaders in schools to enact significant change. Teachers are recognized for their expertise, but no specific level of teaching experience is required. There are two stages in the application process, a written portfolio and a presentation to peers, whereby teachers demonstrate proficiency and suitability against standards. In this way, as a means of addressing teacher attrition due to lack of career opportunities, the initiative provides an avenue by which early career teachers can progress their career.

RESEARCH METHODS

Located within an interpretive paradigm, the study aimed to understand both the experience of teacher leadership and the way in which knowledge is socially constructed and shared by a community (VanDijk, 2006). Initially, to identify the teacher leaders, their roles, expectations, and beliefs about leadership, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. Firstly, for breadth of coverage, a survey was chosen as a primary data collection instrument (Kelley, 2003). The survey included primary and secondary teachers, as well as teachers in rural and city schools. From the 238 responses, quantitative survey data identified groups of interest, including early and late career teachers. Attitudes held by particular cohorts with respect to their work as school leaders were also identified.

Secondly, qualitative methods allowed for investigation of how the participants concerned interpreted or constructed a particular social world (Williamson, Shauder, Wright & Stockfield, 2002). In this respect, the survey contained two open-ended questions, designed to “enable the researcher to understand and capture the view of other people” (Patton, 2002, p. 21). For example, respondents were invited to describe their duties or responsibilities in their current roles as a L3CT and how their work in schools had changed since becoming a L3CT. At the end of the survey, respondents were also given the opportunity to make additional comments, which could illuminate considerations that the researchers may have overlooked.

The second source of qualitative data was the DOE’s *Guide to Becoming a Level Three Classroom Teacher* or simply, the *L3CT Guide* (Department of Education [DET], 2004). A textual analysis of the *L3CT Guide* allowed for the identification of both the purpose and the practice of the L3CT program from the viewpoint of the employer. In addition to identifying the overall intention of the L3CT initiative, data were examined with respect to their alignment with the different discourses of teacher leadership. The *L3CT Guide* was available in the public domain on the DOE website and is an example of what Crump and Ryan (2001) termed multi-faceted texts that state policy direction and act as micro-political resources for educators, consultants, and others community

members (p. 3). Such texts contribute to what Gee (2001) described as a master cultural model, in this instance, of the expert teacher leader as a mechanism for ensuring quality teachers in DOE schools.

The emergence of narrative as a tool for analysis

As previously mentioned, narrative emerged during the analysis of qualitative data. Unexpectedly yielding a rich abundance of data pertaining to the working experiences of L3CTs on specific sites, the two open-ended survey questions proved to be a salient data source. These data were copious in detail with respect to the work carried out by L3CT, their attitudes towards this work, the organization at a site level, and the perception of the L3CT role by others. Providing the opportunity for teachers to foreground their descriptions of leadership experiences, these open-ended survey questions also allowed teachers to identify key roles undertaken by the L3CT, and an opportunity, to some extent, to deconstruct the discourse of teacher leadership. Similarly, a considerable amount of qualitative data was collected from DOE's *L3CT Guide*, as to how official policy discourse constructed the teacher leader and quality teaching (Gale, 2006; Thomas, 2005). Critical discourse analysis provided an opportunity to read against the grain of policy discourse (Gee, 2001; Thomas, 2005) and interrogate the power structures around teacher leadership.

The sheer volume of qualitative data provided challenges for data coding and analysis (Kervin, Vialle, Howard, Herrington, & Okely, 2016). After the initial process of reading and sorting data, patterns were examined to identify linguistic devices such as imagery, symbolism, and repetition. Stylistic devices including punctuation, as well as the use of specific parts of speech were also underscored to compare the teacher discourse and policy discourse. Working at the micro level, it became clear that these snippets of text belonged to a larger story. Subsequently, it became impossible to ignore the unfolding narrative of teacher leadership in the L3CT program.

Many of the respondents created a story about their life as an L3CT, responding in the first person and creating an obvious protagonist. Propelled by conflict, many of these stories foregrounded the micro-politics of the school site, affirming the work of Frost and Harris (2003) and Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, and Ehrich (2009). Crises or obstacles included: the selection process, bureaucracy, unsupportive or critical administrators and/or teaching peers, as well as the internal conflict experienced by some L3CTs, who were confused about their role or struggling to accommodate competing interests. The "telling of a story" in these responses may be explained not only by narrative instinct (Ochs, 2016, p. 16) but also by what Rooney, Lawlor, and Rohan (2016) referred to as assimilating "universal plots so that stories are constructed on an understanding of the elements that guide a good narrative tale" (p. 148). Thus, the narrative approach required the researchers to code content, examine the story structure, and recount the larger story of the respondent (Willis, 2013).

Similarly, the L3CT experience described in policy had an identifiable character and plot. From beginning teacher to expert teacher leader, there was a strong sense of the L3CT as a character on a journey, with L3CT status constructed as a reward. This journey was foregrounded in statements such as “you will join a select group of teachers who are valued by their colleagues and the educational community” and the invitation to participate signaled by phrases such as “if you are an exceptional teacher who leads and inspires your colleagues...” (DET, 2017).

Moreover, as a means of ensuring teacher quality, the L3CT policy endorsed the larger narrative of teacher leadership. The *Guide*’s opening statements can be read as “grammatical features of modality or declarations or statements of fact that realize strong commitments to truth” (Thomas, 2005, p. 12). This was evident in statements highlighting the role of the L3CT in school leadership and linking quality teachers and leaders to the discourse of successful schools. “Leadership in our schools is vital to the success of our students’ education. Our exemplary teachers play important lead roles in facilitating this success” (DET, 2004, p. 3; DET, 2017, p. 2). Thomas (2005) suggested that assumptions about teachers’ agreement with such declarations are associated with the identity of the “good teacher,” who is considered “pivotal to successful schooling, innovation and future growth” (p. 16). More recently, Osmond-Johnson (2015) argued that in neo-liberal political environments, professional teachers are viewed as those who satisfy institutional goals effectively to meet uniform benchmarks for student performance and remain accountable through organizational record keeping.

Using a narrative framework to deconstruct data

Given that narrative emerged in both data sets, it made sense to use narrative as a means of putting the pieces together and of understanding how teacher professional identity is shaped (Cohen, 2010). To organize and understand the data, a narrative framework or story map was developed, acknowledging, what Boje and Rosile (2002) referred to as “interplot,” that is, the relationship between the production, distribution, and consumption of stories (p. 316). Key elements were identified, demonstrating that the cultural narrative of teacher leadership is essentially made of many individual stories. Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou (2008) acknowledged that irrespective of traditions, there is a shared tendency to see narrative as a means of resistance to existing structures of power. The notion that narrative deconstruction is a means of identifying how meta-narratives operate in public discourse (Boje, 2001; Mockler, 2004) was a powerful argument for using narrative analysis in this study.

Informed by Mockler’s (2004) study of teacher representations in public discourse, the researchers employed Boje’s (2001) framework as a tool for analyzing the qualitative data. Across the different texts, the framework identified rebel voices, gaps, and silences. To understand the nature and scope of teacher leadership, the analytical framework was underpinned by four key questions:

1. In the larger narrative of teacher leadership, whose is the dominant voice?
2. Whose interest does it serve?
3. Which rebel voices are present?
4. Whose voices have been silenced?

Narratives were broken down into elements of character, setting, and plot and theme (Crandall, Jaramillo, Olsen, & Payton, 2002). In this way, the method was drawn from narrative conventions and established literary traditions, which are characterized by reflexivity, experientiality, and the deconstruction of boundaries across academic disciplines (Leavy, 2015; Ruby, 1982; Sandelowski, 1991). Analysis completed at the individual word or micro level facilitated the completion of the story map, adding nuance and tone to the narrative.

Whilst simultaneously representing the larger narrative of teacher leadership, the story map presented variations of the “L3CT story,” allowing for the deconstruction of different discourses. Inevitably shedding light on marginalized groups, narrative deconstruction provides opportunities for identifying regimes or practices that disempower teacher leaders (Sachs, 2005; Smeed et al., 2009; Youngs, 2007), as well as those that sustain and promote them. Therefore, it was possible to present not only the dominant discourse surrounding the L3CT as a leadership initiative, but also some alternative or rebel voices, and offer an explanation for their emergence. This deconstruction of the story map in turn informed understanding of how teacher leadership is engendered, and to some extent stifled. The choice of a narrative framework to code and display data was also determined by the need to make the processes of analysis visible to the reader. The framework offers a reading of the cultural narrative of teacher leader, but acknowledges that alternate interpretations are possible. In literary theory, the reader is an essential element in the making of meaning, so whilst the qualitative framework (re)presents particular understandings through the craft of rhetoric and persuasion (Leavy, 2015), the audience is encouraged to bring their own understandings to the text.

The hero’s quest is present in popular culture and traditional texts. Employing the hero’s quest or journey as an extended metaphor for the narrative recognizes the commonality of teachers’ experiences on this journey as well as the archetypal² nature of the narrative. Consistently enabling researchers to categorize stories, the hero’s journey is an example of a master plot, spanning from Aristotle to Frye (Rooney et al., 2016, p. 148). Therefore, the choice of this master plot as an organizer provides a level of accessibility for the reader. The aspirant L3CT teacher leader embarks on their leadership quest, presumably after some sort of initiation. Common to all quests, the journey to L3CT status presents challenges and for many who make more than one attempt at the process, false starts. Some of the teachers “bank” their portfolios for the

next round when they will try again. Others give up the quest. Whilst the L3CT journey is individual and has different obstacles to overcome, much of the quest is in fact a shared journey. Highlighting the quest as an extended metaphor for the journey provided the means to interrogate teacher leadership as one of the rewards or objectives of the quest.

The narrative of policy. Whilst leadership was a global organizer in the deconstruction of the *L3CT Guide*, to identify themes, language, and textual structure were also analyzed at the micro level. This process was similar to that employed by Thomas (2005), who employed critical discourse to demonstrate how policy discourses define teacher quality and legitimize who can speak with authority on the subject of teacher quality (p. 13). In the *L3CT Guide*, the reader is cast in the role of L3CT or an aspirant L3CT and addressed directly as “you,” thereby further personalizing these statements. In the opening paragraph of the *L3CT Guide*, the use of the possessive pronoun, “our” is inclusive and encourages agreement with “statements of truth” that link successful outcomes for students with specific leadership practices. A shared goal of facilitating successful leadership or alternatively a shared problem of addressing the need for better quality leadership is also assumed. Casting the reader as an aspirant teacher leader accentuates the modality of giver and receiver of information (Thomas, 2005). Positioning the reader as aspirant L3CT assumes a particular desirability, which increases as the document highlights the esteem in which L3CT teachers are held.

For example, the language employed throughout the *L3CT Guide* was highly connotative of success and achievement, with frequent use of the superlative, including “exceptional,” “highly,” and “exemplary.” The word “exemplary” is used three times in the brief introduction. Described as “exceptional teachers” with “high quality lessons” and “outstanding teaching practices,” the L3CT were considered to be an “asset” in schools. There was also a strong sense of a reward or acknowledgement being offered, with the expectation that this will lead to ongoing professional growth. Constructing L3CT status as a desirable reward to be granted to teachers with “outstanding practices,” combined with the application process, which requires aspirants to demonstrate high levels of proficiency across a range of categories also aligns with the notion of a leadership quest.

Archetypal characters. Whilst there is commonality in the L3CT story, closer interrogation of the survey data revealed different characters who “voice” a particular version of this story. Whilst each L3CT story is unique, to elucidate the L3CT leadership experience, three representative characters, the Torchbearer, Weary Juggler, and Heckler, were selected to portray the protagonist in diverse versions of the L3CT story. These names were selected by the researchers to reflect the overarching theme in each of these stories. These characters need to be understood as representations or narrative constructions based on data

(re)voicing the wider L3CT experience, rather than literal descriptions of actual teachers. The researchers also acknowledge that these discourses are connected, as well as contested and are not discrete entities (Gee, 2001, p. 22).

The Torchbearer, Weary Juggler, and Heckler were adopted because they enrich understanding of the contextual elements of the L3CT story, such as the organization at a school site, the degree of support given by peers, as well as teacher career expectations and the interests served by the discourse of teacher leadership. Each representation invites the reader to interrogate the L3CT initiative from a different perspective. The teacher voices were also categorized in terms of their engagement with the construction or narrative of teacher leadership as promoted in DOE policy. The provision of multiple readings highlights the notion that “knowledge of teachers and teaching is provisional and contestable” (Howie, 2006, p. 70).

Although the Torchbearer, Weary Juggler, and Heckler were useful representations, they were not equally represented in the data. The inclusion of the minority perspective is deliberate as it allows for the demonstration of the full scope of experience. Often it is the extraordinary story that inspires action (Bullough, 2008). In the following section, the leadership experience of each of the archetypal characters has been “voiced” from the teacher responses to open-ended survey questions to illuminate the contextual details of the leadership experience.

The Torchbearer. Torchbearers have a narrative that attests to a long history of engaging in projects outside of the classroom, of mentoring others and engagement in school decision-making. Torchbearers have undertaken additional duties, sometimes for decades prior to receiving L3CT status, as a means of accomplishing the many tasks that are the responsibility of a self-managed school (Blackmore, 1999). Tasks include the analysis of performance data, development of school-wide curriculum and the facilitation of professional learning for their peers, as well as the responsibility for identifying specific programs and interventions to assist students at educational risk.

Many Torchbearers indicated that they had sought L3CT classification as recognition of their leadership work, hoping for increased time for additional tasks. High levels of engagement outside of the classroom meant a significant increase in workload and the resulting stress that comes from undertaking a multitude of tasks. Despite concerns about the extent to which the time allowance and salary increase was commensurate for the work, there was a high level of satisfaction with being acknowledged as a school leader. An equally high value was placed on the opportunity to work collaboratively with others, including mentoring other teachers and building leadership capacity.

Torchbearers were more likely to have a high degree of autonomy and to construct themselves as having achieved status within their school community. In their discourse, they frequently employed the language of audit, supplying

evidence of tasks to illustrate their work, referring to time allowances or to particular chronologies of their working life in schools. In this way they embraced the language of the L3CT policy, demonstrating their worthiness for selection. Torchbearers often embraced opportunities to work in “acting” positions as administrators and were encouraged by school administrators to continue on this trajectory. This level of satisfaction and engagement possibly prevents the burnout demonstrated by other groups of teachers. The choice of the Torchbearer as a metaphor for this cohort recognized not only their high levels of satisfaction with L3CT but also their role in creating leaders through their mentoring of L3CT aspirants.

The following respondent, a male secondary (Grades 7-12) teacher is constructed primarily as a Torchbearer. He is aged 45-54 years and has between 20-24 years teaching experience.

I’m responsible for Vocational Education Training (VET) in my school, which has a history of outstanding University Entrance success. My role is to enhance the standing of VET within the school community and develop new courses, which offer students a range of options, including Technical and Further Education link courses and traineeships. I mentor fellow teachers on a range of areas, especially those working with these students (especially Students at Educational Risk). Setting up alternative university pathways is also an area of mine. Since becoming an L3CT, I have more interaction with administration and I have assumed a role in senior staff. There is more administrative work and my profile in the school has changed in that other teachers will seek me out to assist them in a range of areas. I have more direct contact with parents and I’m required to speak at different significant parent evenings, especially in relation to courses I have implemented.

The teacher in the example quoted above highlights his autonomy and status as a leader in the school community. He provides evidence of specific programs and initiatives linked to successful outcomes for students. Whilst he has clearly undertaken a number of additional roles to teaching, there is no indication that this is a concern.

The Weary Juggler. Weary Jugglers share many aspects of the previous narrative, including a long history of performing additional roles prior to achieving L3CT. They sought recognition for contributions to school improvement. Some also hoped that the L3CT status would lead to more significant roles in schools, including promotion. Weary Jugglers are more critical of the intensification of their work (Blackmore, 1999; Nichols & Parsons, 2011) than torchbearers and more likely to voice concerns that their additional roles have impacted on their effectiveness as a classroom teacher.

In their quest to become an L3CT, Weary Jugglers may have made multiple attempts and/or had peers who have been unsuccessful. They have a strong desire to be involved in school. However, they are less of a torchbearer for L3CT and may question the worth of the program, particularly in terms

of the extent to which it delivers the promised rewards. Lower satisfaction or disillusionment with L3CT usually stems from negative experiences on the school site subsequent to taking up their L3CT role, including a lack of input into determining their role, resulting in either a multitude of tasks or no definable role. For some, increased workload and the stress resulting from having no clear boundaries around their work impacted on their classroom teaching and sense of wellbeing.

Among the Weary Jugglers, there was often a strong sense of needing to prove their worth in the eyes of their peers (Cohen, 2010; McLeod, 2001). Some felt overlooked by the school's administration team, believing that they were not accorded the status of school leader. They were particularly sensitive to the way they were viewed by their non-L3CT colleagues. This in turn illustrated the impact of the social dimensions of the work place, including the impact of withdrawing the social benefits of collegiality (Jarzabkowski, 2002).

The language employed by the Weary Jugglers tended to be less formal. Although they often provided specifics about time allocations and work ratios, the language was more personal, colloquial, and nuanced than the constructions of leadership in the policy document. There was sometimes a sense of weary resignation or self-doubt in response to a chaotic working life. The responses made by these participants were often more emotive, sometimes expressing feelings of self-doubt or disappointment.

The following female primary teacher (Grades 1-6) is typical of the Weary Juggler, in that she does not have a clearly defined role and has collected a multitude of responsibilities. She is aged between 45 and 54 years and has been working between 25-29 years in schools.

My role is the induction of new teachers to school regarding school policies, priorities etc. I have a mentor role for all teaching staff. I am a leader in the Mathematics area and have a leadership role in the implementation of TRIBES in school. I have a curriculum leadership role with the deputy principal, particularly in Maths, reorganizing / planning and facilitating PD [professional development] days, curriculum meetings, data collection and analysis, investigation, and purchase. I have so much more to do! I'm actually finding stress levels increasing. I sometimes feel "whole school" Level 3 commitments detract from my ability to do my best for the students in my classroom.

The teacher quoted in the example of the Weary Juggler emphasizes her workload and increased stress as a direct consequence of having multiple roles. She also voices concern that these additional roles may be detracting from her classroom teaching.

The Heckler. The Heckler or rebel voice in this study was a vocal minority. These teachers had a level of anger, rather than disappointment with their L3CT experience. Frequently either they or a peer had a negative experience

or difficulty (including multiple attempts) in obtaining the L3CT status. Often there was explicit disdain for the selection process and a belief that the rewards for the “hoop jumping exercise” had not been forthcoming.

Hecklers are more likely to report ambivalence and hostility from others with respect to the L3CT status. There was a sense of betrayal (Hargreaves, 2001) that their experience is not valued and that they are either ignored or given a multitude of tasks, including those they consider the domain of the school’s administration. The respondents who most typified this persona were more likely to report high levels of burn out and/or express a desire to take extended leave or leave the profession (Mackenzie, 2007).

Hecklers generally wrote in the vernacular with little evidence of “edu-speak” or audit, that is, the language of policy. There seemed to be a rejection of the discourse of quality teaching espoused by DOE in the *L3CT Guide*. Hecklers were the most emotive in tone and were more likely to use stylistic devices such as bolding, block capitals, and punctuation to persuade the reader to engage with their argument. In some instances, the Hecklers wrote outside of the margins of the page, a metaphor for the position taken by this cohort.

The following L3CT experience has elements of the Heckler, particularly in the protest about the lack of status or genuine opportunities for leadership. The respondent is a female secondary (Grades 7-12) teacher, aged 55 or over, who has been teaching for more than 30 years. She gained L3CT status in 2002.

I coordinate the inclusion program for children with special needs in Year 7. I performance manage education assistants. I liaise and assist whole school including teachers in Arts, Technology and Design, and Physical Education to include special needs children into these programs. I liaise with administration regarding reporting proformas, timetabling issues and provide professional learning for staff on matters of inclusion. The assumption that more leadership responsibility would be gained has not happened for me at all. I have had to fight very hard for any leadership initiatives. Statements made by administration like “only proper Level 3’s (team teachers) can do performance management” (i.e. L3 classroom teachers are not “proper L3’s”) is highly demoralizing and denigrating.

This example of a Heckler is more emotive in the use of language and constructs leadership as a “fight.” She also provides specific details about a number of additional roles to provide evidence of leadership roles, whilst at the same time highlighting a lack of status or acknowledgement as a school leader.

Gaps and silences

These three stories are not the only voices in the L3CT narrative. Crucial to interrogation of discourse is examining what or who has been omitted (Bloomfield, 2006). Respondents shared examples of colleagues who had either decided not to apply after seeing what L3CTs went through and/or commented on peers who were unsuccessful. This suggests that there are

many expert teachers who work as informal leaders who have chosen not to apply for L3CT and quite a few who have failed the selection process and have consequently withdrawn from this particular quest.

Moreover, school reform and accountability discourses such as that of the *L3CT Guide* promote a shared understanding of the expert or quality teacher (Bourke, Ryan, & Lidstone, 2012; Howie, 2006; Thomas, 2005). There is minimal engagement in L3CT policy guidelines with issues such as increased workload, teacher stress concerning the application process, or the lack of opportunity for some teachers to participate genuinely as a school leader. Therefore, there are gaps and to some extent silences in the DOE's teacher leadership discourse, in that the policy is largely about assertions (Thomas, 2005), where best practice in terms of human resource management is assumed, rather than ensured. There is little acknowledgement in DoE's *L3CT Guide* that some teachers are effectively "locked out" of genuine school leadership opportunities, including the encouragement and support to become L3CT because of the specific context in which they work. For example, without the same opportunity for aspirant mentoring, teachers in isolated rural schools are disadvantaged compared with metropolitan schools where there may be a larger pool of L3CT providing collegiate mentoring.

COMMON STORY THEMES

Whilst the narrative framework amplified different experiences, it also identified commonalities or themes Clandinin (2007) in the L3CT leadership story, including the desire for genuine recognition, the significance of peers in self-efficacy, the influence of the school principal and work intensification. The majority of L3CT attest to the selection process being overly complex and time-consuming. Other common obstacles or barriers were the lack of time and resources, competing and shifting interests, and perceptions of teacher status subsequent to becoming an L3CT.

Status or the desire for recognition was a preoccupation of all of the L3CT narratives and a site of conflict for many. Increased status was the stated goal for many of the L3CT in this study, either as an alternative career milestone to becoming a school administrator or in the hope that L3CT would result in career advancement. Recognition by and the support of colleagues were crucial to the L3CT's self-efficacy as a leader (Cohen, 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2002; Zinn, 1997).

Work intensification was another common thread. The qualitative data demonstrated that the majority of teachers were involved in considerably larger roles than examples given in DoE policy. The intensification of work meant some L3CT were concerned about the impact on their classroom practice (Gunter et al., 2001). The extent to which this intensification of work is accepted depended on the level of satisfaction with L3CT role. Aspirant leaders who

believed that the L3CT status provided a genuine opportunity for them to advance their career were more likely to accept the increased workload. Teachers who constructed themselves primarily as classroom teachers were the most likely to worry about the impact of additional roles on their classroom teaching. The extent to which teachers felt respected and supported by the school's administration also had a bearing on their attitude to increased workload.

CONCLUSION

The use of narrative as a sense making device and in particular the use of narrative deconstruction resulted in a more in-depth examination of the micro-politics of school leadership and affirmed the work of Frost and Harris (2003), who highlighted the need for situated understanding, encompassing emotional intelligence and understanding of micro-politics. This understanding is needed so that teacher leaders can overcome the barriers that binaries such as leader and non-leader create. In particular, this study makes apparent the need to address the personal dimension (Fielding, 2006), rather than simply assess a teacher's suitability for leadership, based on a framework of skills and assessment of expertise.

Teacher-leaders whether they are L3CT or not, need explicit leadership professional development that acknowledges the micro-politics of school decision-making and provides skills in connecting relationships (Muijs & Harris, 2003) and dilemma management (Cardno, 2008). Mackenzie (2007) also affirmed this need for teachers to be given a specific set of skills to embrace collaborative leadership, arguing that these skills are usually only sought when teachers desire to move into school administration. Moreover, teachers need the support of principals when considering frameworks for leadership (Dawson, 2011).

Whilst the use of narrative analysis and representation were unexpected, the study nevertheless reinforces the value of narrative in a wide range of contexts, as well as the benefits of being open to allowing methods to evolve during the course of research. Constructing narratives provided an opportunity to insert teachers' voices, effectively highlighting the importance of teacher emotions (Barth, 2007; Day, 2008; Hargreaves 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2007) in the realization of teacher leadership. Policy texts assert particular constructions of quality teaching and leadership that are normative and persuasive (Mockler & Sachs, 2006; Mumby & Mease, 2006; Thomas, 2005). The construction of these leadership stories contextualizes teacher leadership and challenges this hegemony. Moreover, the narrative of L3CT leadership highlights the micro-politics of teacher leadership, including the impact of policy discourse as an area for further study.

The power of the story in this instance is the facility to construct the dominant cultural narrative, whilst at the same time identifying diverse experiences, thereby exposing alternate ways to make meaning. In this way, the L3CT

leadership experience was elucidated through three representative characters, the Torchbearer, Weary Juggler, and Heckler, who portrayed diverse teacher protagonists. The use of narrative in this study highlights the compelling nature of stories and storytelling and their potential to “explore what resides below the surface” (Rooney et al., p. 147). The study also affirms that sources, such as policy texts, which are not usually read as stories, may be better understood if they are interrogated using narrative methods. Whilst this study examined a specific leadership program, highlighting acceptance and resistance, there is potential through narrative to gain a greater understanding as to why teacher leadership on a broad scale has not yet been realized. Indeed, through the power of narrative, the complexities of teacher leadership stories may be captured, with the hope of unveiling the unrealized potential of the “sleeping giant” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001 p. 2).

NOTES

1. The Department of Education (DOE) was known as the Department of Education and Training between 2003 and 2009. In 2009, the Department of Training (DET) and the Department of Education became separate entities. According to the current style guide on the Department's website, DOE is the correct acronym. Therefore, all references to the Department uses DOE. However, publications still use the DET acronym in this article.
2. Archetypes in literary theory are drawn from Jungian (1956) psychology.

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