Leadership & Community Participation: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This article presents a literature review of the relationship between leadership and community participation to identify the research topics underpinning the studies and theoretical works in this domain[1]. A systematic review of electronic sources was conducted, covering the period from 1990 to 2015. A total of 1.890 articles in the social sciences were identified, and the full texts of 17 articles were reviewed in detail. The criteria used in selecting articles with key theoretical and empirical contributions were the number of times an article was cited and the relevance of the topic. The results were exploited through a comprehensive review. The articles discuss different modes of community participation that have been divided into the categories of leadership in professional communities, leadership in relation to family participation, and leadership in relation to other community members. It has been identified that there are fewer works that include integrative approaches in terms of dialogical leadership among all community members. This review suggests a need to further investigate the leadership dynamics that, through community participation, may result in improvements for society.

Keywords: dialogic leadership, community participation

Liderazgo y Participación de la Comunidad: Una Revisión de Literatura

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Resumen

Este artículo presenta una revisión de literatura sobre la relación entre el liderazgo y la participación de la comunidad para identificar los temas de investigación que fundamentan los estudios y trabajos teóricos en este ámbito[1]. Se ha realizado una revisión sistemática en recursos electrónicos cubriendo el período desde 1990 hasta 2015. Se identificaron un total de 1.890 artículos en ciencias sociales, revisándose en detalle un total de 17 textos completos. Los criterios para seleccionar las principales contribuciones teóricas y empíricas fueron el número de citas de los artículos y la relevancia del tema. Los resultados fueron explotados a través de una revisión comprensiva. Los artículos abordan diferentes formas de participación de la comunidad que han sido divididas en las categorías de liderazgo en comunidades profesionales, liderazgo en relación a la participación familiar, y liderazgo en relación a otros miembros de la comunidad. Se ha identificado que existen menos trabajos que incluyan enfoques integradores en relación al liderazgo dialógico entre todos los miembros de la comunidad. Esta revisión sugiere la necesidad de investigar más sobre las dinámicas de liderazgo que, a través de la participación de la comunidad, pueden implicar mejoras para la sociedad.

Palabras clave: liderazgo dialógico, participación comunitaria

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Leadership has long been discussed in theoretical and empirical works in the social sciences, particularly since the Industrial Revolution. Standing on the shoulders of giants (Merton, 1965), it is possible to identify leadership topics in Weber's classification of authority (1946), Parsons' leadership approach linked to collective responsibility (1983), Gramsci's intellectual and moral leadership (1971) and Freire's revolutionary leadership (1996). Taking into account the historical context influencing these developments, leadership has emerged over the years as a field of knowledge that resonates with social change, transformation and the democratisation of societies (Goethals, Sorenson & MacGregor, 2004). However, it is important not to forget leadership approaches linked to destructive leadership (Krasikova, Green & LeBreton, 2013) and the historical background of a type of leadership exercised by fascist or neo-nazi movements (Virchow, 2004).

In the 21st century, sociology, management studies, education and political science have become essential to further investigating the ways in which leadership is improving societies, communities and individuals. In fact, the debate regarding the impact of research results, not only at the scientific level but also at the political and social levels, underpins current debates influencing the way science is conceptualised and developed by researchers. To address this challenge, in 2015 the European Commission launched the peer-reviewed Social Impact Open Repository (SIOR), an open source repository to store evidence of social impact as a result of research activity. Some of the advancements and projects included in this repository have been published in recent works (Flecha, Soler-Gallart & Sordé, 2015). The research agenda in leadership is being influenced by these emerging discussions in the international scientific community. Although it is still early to develop a review of the social impact of leadership research, this article provides an overview of leadership and community participation as a topic that underpins a significant number of leadership works and publications.

In recent decades, a body of research has developed linking leadership with the role of communities to enhance transformation. Resonating with this approach, transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004), non-

positional teacher leadership (Frost, 2014), shared leadership (Lambert, 2002) or dialogic leadership (Padros & Flecha, 2014) have played a role in leadership in very diverse parts of the world. Most research in this domain has paid special attention to leadership roles and positions within organisations and, at the same time, to the awareness of how leadership can enable communities to lead change by giving them a voice and an opportunity for transformation.

This review attempts to summarise the relevant literature on the relationship between leadership and community participation and to identify the research topics underpinning the studies and theoretical works in this domain.

Methods

Search Strategy

Electronic sources were exploited through a comprehensive review in the social sciences. Selection focused on contributions from the fields of sociology and education and educational research. This endeavour was mainly conducted using the electronic databases Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), SCOPUS and Erih Plus, although some others were considered. The selected works were limited to the English language and to the years 1990 to 2015. Both empirical and theoretical articles were considered from any part of the world. Searches were developed using the following search terms and concepts: leadership, community participation, educational leadership and community. Furthermore, some works published in books, as well book chapters, were included in the results.

As a result of the search, 1.885 articles were identified. After refining by the research areas of sociology, education and educational research, social issues, and social sciences other topics, 1.341 articles were identified. There were 605 articles resulting from a search with the key words leadership and community participation; there were 736 articles resulting from a search using the key words educational leadership and community. A total of 1.341 articles were sorted by number of citations and relevance. The articles cited more than 10 times were reviewed, and totalled 145 for the key words

leadership and community part, and 136 for the key words educational leadership and community. Furthermore, the articles with fewer than 10 citations were reviewed so as to identify those with fewer citations but recently published. There were 40 articles in this category. As a result, a total of 321 articles were reviewed to identify potential contributions that narrowed the topic of leadership and community participation. The full text of 17 articles was obtained and reviewed. Additionally, articles related to the role of communities in social movements and works addressing related issues in leadership research with regard to communities were also included. Furthermore, as a result of a search in other databases, two articles were selected.

Results

Leadership Linked to Health Research

A body of research focuses on the role of leadership in relation to health education and public health. Although this topic is indirectly linked to the general approach discussed in this literature review, it is worth noting that some of the most cited articles are related to the field of health. As an example, the article entitled *Project Northland: Outcomes of a communitywide alcohol use prevention program during early adolescence* (Perry et al, 1996) is cited 246 times and addresses the prevention of alcohol use among young people. The authors frame the project in a multilevel and communitywide context that includes the roles of peer leadership and parental involvement.

With regard to leadership, the project included a programme entitled "The Amazing Alternatives Classroom Program". One of the actions in this programme was "The Exciting and Entertaining Northland Students", in which the team included peer leaders selected by the students without adult advice. The aim of this action was to develop peer leadership experience beyond the school by planning alcohol-free activities. This strategy was used by several programmes in 24 school districts in Minnesota. The results demonstrated that it was effective in reducing alcohol use.

Leadership, Professional Communities and Communities of Practice

Major contributions linked to leadership and community participation incorporate professional communities and communities of practice. Before summarising the articles identified in the literature review, we provide the definitions commonly used with regard to these two concepts.

   Professional community. An approach to defining a professional community is provided by Judith Warren Little (2012). In her work, she argues that a "professional community refers to close relationships among teachers as professional colleagues, usually with the implication that these relationships are oriented toward teacher learning and professional development" (p. 469). Furthermore, on the basis of several works (Grodsky & Gamoran, 2003; Louis & Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Secada & Adajian, 1997) she provides a list of five common elements that can be identified in very diverse studies characterising professional communities. These elements include the relevance of the existence of shared values and purposes, the focus on student learning and well-being, the importance of working collaboratively to improve students' learning, the existence of practices to support teacher learning, and collective control over important decisions linked to the curriculum (p. 470). Furthermore, the author also addresses the concept of a community of practice in her article "Locating learning in teachers' communities of practice: opening up problems of analysis in records of everyday work" (2002), cited 137 times, to frame the analytic resources useful in examining teacher development and school reform.
   Community of practice. Among the diverse authors addressing the definition of and approaches to a community of practice in the volume "Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice" (2010), Blackmore highlights the work of Etienne Wenger and colleagues and introduces the relevance of his work at the international level. Some of the chapters of this volume link communities of practice with social learning systems, professional capital or the ways in which such communities can support changing roles, among other topics.

Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner (2015) describe what a community of practice is and some of the elements characterising these communities. The authors explain that "communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (p. 1-2). As stated, communities of practice are influencing different domains, from education to art to engineering. This implies that actions linked to these communities of practice can be promoted from diverse fields and social realities.

According to these definitions, three papers included a focus on professional communities and communities of practice.

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) studied the leadership of the principal and the interactions taking place both with other teachers and between teachers to identify in which ways these interactions influence instructional practices. The authors developed a quantitative study with more than 4.100 completed surveys from teachers in grades K-12 in the United States, analysing the relationships among practices linked to professional communities. Based on their results, the authors argue that the existence of shared leadership and professional community is related to the strength of three types of instructional behaviours linked to effective practices in schools. Thus, there is evidence of a relationship between leadership and its impact on student achievement and school improvement. As described in diverse articles selected in this literature review, both the topic of school improvement and the ways in which leadership influences learning underpin some of the studies we have evaluated.

Printy (2008) presented a study in which school principals and department chairs in secondary education were central to research identifying their influence on science and mathematics teachers' communities of practice. This approach underpins the analysis of two stages in the research process. The first stage deeply examines the relevance of

school leaders with regard to teachers' participation in communities of practice; the second stage identifies the ways in which the synergies between school leadership and teachers' competences and pedagogical skills can influence communities of practice. The findings suggest that principals and department chairpersons influence the participation of teachers in communities of practice, particularly their opportunities to learn. Finally, the author highlights the potential connection between leadership and student achievement. Again, synergies between leadership and learning or school improvement appear in the literature.

Day (2000) reviews leadership development with the aim of demonstrating the relevance of building human and social capital in organisations. The author uses the conceptual context, the practice context and the research context to demonstrate the need to link leader development with leadership development and to bridge both the practice and science of leadership development. Leadership is understood as a social process engaging everyone in the community and the author supports this with references to Barker (1997), Drath & Palus (1994) and Wenger & Snyder (2000). According to Wenger's work (1998), Day includes the importance of building commitments among members of a community of practice.

Beyond Professionals and Teachers: Towards Family Participation

A significant number of articles address family participation and the ways in which leadership is exercised to enable parents and other family members to participate in their schools. In recent years, several authors have investigated the role of the family in relation to social changes in the last decades of the 20th century. For example, Beck-Gernsheim (2002) analyses the changing lifestyles of families according to cohabitation, separation and same-sex partnerships and studies changes in conventional family units. Furthermore, other authors (Flecha, Gómez, & Puigvert, 2003) relate the challenges that families are facing to the increase in dialogue in both public and private spheres. According to their contribution, new models of interaction have emerged (in a dialogic societal shift) in which families and communities claim for more dialogue with structures and institutions, including schools. Taking into account family changes, the increase in dialogue, and different

modes of participation in education by an increasingly diverse citizenry, some works related to educational projects (Diez, Gatt & Racionero, 2011) use the term "family participation" instead of "parents' participation" as a way to highlight the diversity of people responsible for children.

Taking these works into consideration, six papers provided insights with regard to the role of leadership in increasing family involvement, engagement and participation in schools.

Warren, Hong, Rubin and Uy (2009) studied three community-based organisations (CBOs) in Chicago, Los Angeles and New Jersey to investigate their efforts to engage parents in schools. The communities in which these CBOs developed their activities were urban and low-income. The authors argue that the role of the CBOs is potentially useful in creating synergies of collaboration with schools to enable change, overcoming the gap between educators and families. As a result of their research, they identified three core elements of parent engagement, one of them being leadership development among parents, which is of particular interest for this literature review. The authors suggest that educators can collaborate with the community to support the development of parent leadership in challenging contexts, with the aim of supporting initiatives that can highlight common needs, interests and shared values in school communities. The flourishing of parent leadership in this context implies a kind of leadership that can be linked to diverse organisations.

Evans and Shirley (2008) describe the experiences of members of a community-based organisation in Boston, the Jamaica Plain Parent Organizing Project. The starting point of this qualitative study is the relevance of parent participation in schools, considering the self-interest of families. The authors' results are particularly relevant to demonstrating the ways in which this assumption (i.e., self-interestedness) is overcome and how parents can impact the whole community. Parents' participation in education results in common concerns and understandings reaching the community, with the potential to enhance the role of community-based organisations in education.

Brown and Duku (2008) developed a qualitative study in Eastern Cape, South Africa, in which they investigate the existing dynamics among parents and the process of school governance. The authors looked at factors

influencing the parents' participation in school governance, particularly with regard to gender politics and African traditions. Their results demonstrated the tension between some African cultural values and those underpinning modern school policies and legislation. The authors outlined the critical implications of their results for school leadership, arguing that tensions will persist if the diverse voices, customs and traditions of the school's population are dismissed by school governing bodies.

Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) indirectly address parent involvement in schools in relation to the influence of principals' leadership in secondary education on classroom instruction and student achievement through key organisational factors. They collected data from the Chicago Public Schools through surveys administered during the 2006-2007 academic year to all secondary school teachers. The domains underpinning the teacher survey were classroom instruction, professional development, learning climates, parent involvement and principals' leadership. According to their results, the authors suggest that "principals take more time to work with teachers who have particularly low levels of academic demand in their classes. It could also indicate that principals' efforts through mechanisms other than parent involvement, school culture and professional community are counterproductive to increasing academic demands" (p. 644). This article demonstrates the relevance of parent diversity in schools and the potential role of parents in decision making bodies.

Khalifa (2012) studied the impact of a particular principal's community leadership in relation to school community and student outcomes by using an ethnographic research methodology including participant observations, interviews, and descriptive and interpretive memoing. By describing the principal, students, staff and representatives of the community, the study compares leadership behaviours that highlight both school- and community-focused approaches. The author proposes some possible explanations for the lack of parental participation in the school but clearly describes the change in parents' involvement over two years as a result of the principal's support of and commitment to community-based causes and concerns. As a result, the role of principals in enhancing change is analysed by introducing a leadership approach based more on principals' perceptions and willingness to embrace risks and less on their charisma and personality. In a sense, this

article is in line with other works in which leadership capacity is understood as a possibility for anyone; leadership is not only for those being trained to lead or with leadership "characteristics."

Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) highlighted the impact of parent-school engagement with regard to children's school experiences and academic results. On the basis of a qualitative study developed in different settings in New South Wales, Australia, the authors looked at the role of leadership practices of school principals as one of the key influences on building sustainable relationships between parents and schools. The results also indicate that the attitudes and communication of principals are crucial to maintaining school-home relationships. To sum up, when a principal has a welcoming and supportive attitude in relation to parents' engagement, families are more inclined to be involved in the school.

Beyond Professionals, Teachers and Families

Eight articles provided a focus on community, raising awareness of the relevance of the agents that can play a role in schools, beyond the professionals and teachers working in schools or families with children attending them.

Epstein, Galindo and Sheldon (2011) developed a comprehensive understanding of the impact of district and school leadership and actions in relation to the quality of programs for family and community involvement. In their quantitative work, more than 400 schools were used to obtain survey data to analyse the contributions of district leadership and school teamwork in relation to the implementation of basic structures and advanced outreach in partnership programs. Among the findings, there is evidence that principals' support of family and community involvement contributes significantly to advancing outreach and involving all families in students' education.

Sillins and Mulford (2004) researched the nature of organisational learning and leadership practices. They included the processes that support organisational learning and their impact on teacher leadership. The authors developed a model to "examine the influence of a number of internal school variables on Teacher Leadership and on Organisational Learning, and the

impact of teacher Leadership and Organisational Learning through Teachers' Work on students' participation in and Engagement with school" (p. 451-452). In their study, they defined twelve variables underpinning the model, three of which included leadership issues. In particular, there are variables related to the "leader", leadership satisfaction and teacher leadership. Of particular relevance is the fact that three variables are linked to the community and participation: community focus, participation and engagement. The authors discuss the results in relation to schools and communities, concluding that in the Australian context further strategies are embraced to make the most of community involvement with the aim of improving teaching and learning. Looking at the external sources of the school, they suggest distributing leadership responsibility as a strategy for reaching the community. This article is in agreement with other contributions that look outside the school walls to identify the potential of communities to lead change through dialogue and collaboration with schools.

Christens and Dolan (2011) explore how a particular youth organising initiative in California was able to effectively produce impacts in terms of youth development, community development and social change. Furthermore, the authors argue for the impact of youth organising in terms of policy change, institution building and new programme implementation. By reviewing organisational documents and conducting interviews with people who played different leadership roles in the organisation, the article presents a discussion of the synergies between youth development, community development and social change in relation to youth organising. With regard to education, it is important to highlight that the authors include some experiences of transformation that link the role of youth organising and schools. For example, an experienced youth leader describes the process of developing new youth leaders to empower youth voices in schools.

Frost (2012) explores the challenge of education reform through the non-positional teacher leadership theory. Data were obtained from the "Advancing Education Quality and Inclusion" initiative, the APREME (Advancing the Participation and Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Education) project, and the International Teacher Leadership Initiative. By discussing a large-scale survey involving ten countries in South East Europe,

the participation of families and principals, and the results of case studies in five countries, the author presents the following principles to support teacher leadership: a partnership between schools and external agencies; mutual support through membership in a group and a network; collaboration with school principals; opportunities for open discussion; a project-based methodology; enabling teachers to identify personal development priorities; tools to scaffold personal reflection, planning and action; facilitating access to relevant literature; providing guidance on leadership strategies; providing guidance on the collection and use of evidence; mobilisation of organisational support and orchestration; providing a framework to help teachers document their work; providing opportunities for networking beyond the school; recognition through certification; and professional knowledge arising from accounts of teacher leadership. Furthermore, Frost provides stories of change in the format of vignettes that illustrate how minority families in Kosovo are involved in the life of the school or the ways in which a teacher works with the community in rural Serbia.

Dugan and Komives (2010) focused on student leadership by introducing their work with scientific literature in this particular domain of leadership research as well as some evidence from this research. The aim of their study was "to explore influences on college students' capacities for socially responsible leadership" (p. 528). The study involved more than 14.000 college seniors from institutions in 25 states and the District of Columbia and was planned with two-part sampling strategies. Using the analysis strategy, one of the five blocks focused on collegiate experiences and included elements such as leadership positions in student organisations and participation in short, moderate or long duration leadership training programmes. Furthermore, there was a block devoted to leadership efficacy. As a conclusion, the authors noted the relevance of leadership efficacy and the critical role of higher education in shaping student leadership.

Lai (2015) focused on the identification of the leadership practices of school principals aimed at exploring possibilities for developing the school's capacity for transformation, and how principals can make the most of such relationships. To address this topic, the author paid special attention to the capacity-building practices shared in in-depth interviews with school principals in Hong Kong. In summarising the findings, Lai describes three

school capacity-building practices identified in the analysis of data: to foster teacher learning in communities of practice and teacher participation in decision-making, to promote school-community connections to facilitate student learning through participation, and to align external demands and schools' internal circumstances. The promotion of school-community connections is of particular interest in the field of leadership and community participation. According to the results of this study, it can be stated that school-community connections can support transformative processes if they are accurately identified and exploited through community partnerships.

Shields (2004) highlights the relevance of leadership for social justice by taking advantage of both empirical research and her previous educator experience to raise critical issues about the role of educational leaders with regard to social justice. The author criticises the ways in which students and their families from minority cultures or low socioeconomic backgrounds are marginalised in schools. She advocates for transformational educational leaders that ensure academic success for all by placing social justice at the core of educators' agendas. The author proposes the exercise of moral dialogue as a way in which educational leaders can cultivate relationships with the surrounding communities by facilitating dialogic interventions.

Padros and Flecha (2014) develop a conceptualisation of dialogic leadership by including some of the most relevant contributions from social sciences and leadership research. According to the authors "dialogic leadership is thus the process through which leadership practices of all the members of the educational community are created, developed and consolidated, including teachers, students, families, non-teaching staff, volunteers and any other members of the community. In their commitment as dialogic leaders, they seek to work together with families, teachers and students especially by supporting and promoting actions that contribute to transform the school and the community, which include the neighbourhood and the interactions at homes" (p. 217). It is important to highlight that according to this conceptualisation, any community member can enhance dialogic leadership by adding the own individual background to the community, or supporting or leading change in dialogue with community members. This may occur regardless of the educational level, gender, culture, or socioeconomic status of the people in the community. The

authors based some of the elements underpinning dialogic leadership on the results of the INCLUD-ED project, the only research in the social sciences selected by the European Commission for the list of the 10 most successful investigations in Europe (European Commission, 2011).

Leadership and Community in Social Movements and Organisations

A body of literature focuses on leadership emerging from social movements and organisations and the role of the community in such movements. Although it is partially linked to the results discussed in this literature review, we provide a brief summary to include some of the most cited works in this domain at the international level.

Ganz (2011) discusses the ways in which the public can mobilise to demand political change by enhancing "public narratives". The author (2010) argues for the need to enhance leadership effectiveness through a process of adaptation, learning and shared knowledge, thus providing effective responses to major challenges that should mobilise the whole community. At the Harvard Kennedy School, the author developed *The leading change network*, which has demonstrated its effectiveness and success in very diverse social movements, including environmental issues, health, housing and political campaigns.

Several studies analyse diverse social movements in relation to leadership practices. Kenneth, Ganz, Baggeta, Han and Lim (2010) developed a model to explain the effectiveness of civic associations in which certain elements, such as committed activists in associations or organisational capacity, become crucial to generating effectiveness. Moreover, the ability to cooperate with voluntary participants and make their voices heard in public spaces is also highlighted by the authors. Another study developed by Harley, Metcalf and Irwin (2014) explored, in a rural community in Australia, the flourishing of leadership during the implementation of a water saving initiative. The relevance of this qualitative study relies on the fact that the groups in the community were engaged in the process, enabling a leadership style that demonstrated the positive results of collaboration in facilitating sustainable community development. Finally, Baggeta, Han and Andrews (2013) conducted a multilevel analysis involving volunteer leaders

to determine how individual characteristics and team dynamics generate committed leaders. Some of the results suggest that leaders in teams that operate more interdependently, share work more equally, and devote smaller shares of time to meetings, are more committed to their work with associations.

Limitations

This literature review presents some limitations. There are books and book chapters in the field of leadership with relevance to leadership research. Only a few references are included because of the difficulties of identifying those most relevant at the international level. Further developments to rank publishing companies could contribute to this task in the future. As previously mentioned, only English articles were considered and non-English works are missing from this literature review. Additionally, the search is limited to particular key words and not all relevant terms were included, as adding them would result in more than 2.000 articles. Finally, the research areas are also limited to sociology, education and educational research, social issues, and social sciences other topics, eliminating areas such as social work or management.

Conclusion

The literature review has provided evidence of the topics underpinning leadership research in relation to community participation. There are two major contributions to be highlighted. First, the articles discuss different modes of community participation: leadership in professional communities and communities of practice, leadership in relation to family participation and involvement, and leadership in relation to other community members. Second, there are fewer works that use an integrative approaches of dialogical leadership among all community members. In this vein, this review offers insights for further leadership research in relation to community participation.

This review indicates a need to further investigate the leadership dynamics that result in particular improvements in society. How is

leadership practiced in organisations given the increase in dialogic dynamics in societies? Are there practices of leadership that could be transferred across countries? In what ways does leadership research promote improvements in those contexts where community participation already exists? And last but not least, how can leadership research results make a difference in terms of social impact? Societies, communities and individuals claim to researchers to provide solutions to their own daily problems. Employability, school dropouts, the risk of poverty… is leadership research ready for the accountability to society in terms of social impact?

Notes

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