

# Teacher Leadership and Professional Learning Practices: An Indian Perspective

Dr. Ajaypal Singh<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Poonampreet Kaur<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Khalsa College of Education, Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar, Punjab, India.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Khalsa College of Education, G.T. Road, Amritsar, Punjab, India.

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ajaypal Singh

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260459>

## ABSTRACT

Teacher leadership has increasingly emerged as a critical dimension of educational reform worldwide. In India, the evolving educational landscape under policy frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) emphasises teacher autonomy, professional growth, and leadership capacity as essential components of school transformation. This research paper explores teacher leadership and professional learning practices within the Indian educational context. It investigates how teachers assume leadership roles formally and informally, how professional learning communities and continuous professional development initiatives contribute to teacher agency, and what structural and cultural challenges influence implementation.

Using a qualitative research design based on policy analysis, secondary literature review, and thematic synthesis of empirical studies conducted in India, this study examines the intersection of distributed leadership, professional learning communities, and systemic reforms. The findings reveal that while policy frameworks support teacher empowerment, institutional hierarchies, workload pressures, and resource disparities limit leadership enactment. However, digital platforms, collaborative cultures in progressive schools, and teacher-led innovations provide significant opportunities.

The study concludes that teacher leadership in India is in a transitional phase, moving from bureaucratic compliance toward collaborative professionalism. Strategic investment in leadership training, structural decentralization, and equitable professional development systems can strengthen teacher leadership nationwide.

**Keywords:** teacher leadership, professional learning, India, distributed leadership, NEP 2020, professional development

## INTRODUCTION

Teachers are central to educational transformation. Beyond classroom instruction, teachers influence curriculum design, student engagement, institutional culture, and community relationships. Globally, teacher leadership is recognized as a key driver of school improvement and student achievement (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

In India, the educational system is vast and diverse, serving over 250 million school students across varied socio-economic and cultural contexts. The traditional structure of Indian schooling has been hierarchical, with authority concentrated in principals and administrative bodies. Teachers were often viewed as implementers of policies rather than contributors to policy formation or institutional decision-making.

Recent reforms challenge this paradigm. The National Education Policy highlights teacher

empowerment, autonomy, and professional standards as foundational to educational reform (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020). It calls for the development of National Professional Standards for Teachers and mandates 50 hours of annual continuous professional development.

Despite these developments, teacher leadership in India remains under-researched. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how teacher leadership is conceptualized, practiced, and supported within Indian schools and professional learning systems.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Conceptualizing Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leadership refers to the capacity of teachers to influence school improvement beyond their classroom responsibilities (Harris, 2003). York-Barr and Duke (2004) define it as the process by which teachers individually or collectively influence colleagues, principals, and communities to improve teaching and learning.

Teacher leadership may be:

- Formal (e.g., department heads, academic coordinators)
- Informal (e.g., mentoring peers, leading innovation projects)

In India, informal teacher leadership often emerges through collaborative initiatives rather than official designation.

### **Distributed Leadership Theory**

Distributed leadership theory posits that leadership is shared among organizational members rather than centralized (Spillane, 2006). This perspective aligns with school-based management models.

In the Indian context, distributed leadership challenges traditional bureaucratic structures. While private and urban schools increasingly adopt distributed leadership practices, many government schools continue centralized decision-making patterns.

### **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

DuFour and Eaker (1998) emphasize collaboration, reflective inquiry, and shared responsibility in professional learning communities. PLCs are structured forums where teachers analyze student data, share pedagogical strategies, and co-develop solutions.

Indian research indicates that PLCs are more prevalent in private schools and NGO-supported institutions than in mainstream government schools.

Teacher Professional Development in India  
Teacher education and professional development in India are regulated by institutions such as the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

Historically, professional development followed a workshop-based model characterized by one-time training sessions. Studies suggest such models often lack sustained impact.

Recent digital initiatives like DIKSHA attempt to provide scalable, continuous learning opportunities. However, access inequities persist.

### **Indian Policy Context**

Right to Education Act (2009)

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act mandated teacher qualifications and emphasized accountability. It created pressure for teacher upskilling but did not explicitly address leadership roles.

National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy proposes:

- Professional standards for teachers
- Career progression pathways
- Autonomy in pedagogy
- Continuous professional development
- NEP 2020 positions teachers as nation-builders and reform leaders.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the conceptual foundations of teacher leadership in the Indian educational context.

2. To analyze professional learning practices that promote teacher leadership in India.
3. To identify structural, cultural, and systemic challenges affecting teacher leadership.
4. To evaluate the impact of NEP 2020 on teacher empowerment.
5. To propose strategic recommendations for strengthening teacher leadership.

### **Research Questions**

Q 1. How is teacher leadership conceptualized and practiced in Indian schools?

Q2. What professional learning practices support teacher leadership development?

Q3. What challenges hinder effective teacher leadership in India?

Q4. How does NEP 2020 influence teacher leadership and professional learning?

Q5. What strategies can enhance teacher leadership across diverse Indian contexts?

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative research design using:

- Policy document analysis
- Review of peer-reviewed literature
- Thematic synthesis of Indian case studies
- Secondary data interpretation

Data sources included academic journals, government policy documents, reports from NCERT and NCTE, and empirical studies conducted between 2005 and 2024.

Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns related to leadership practices, professional learning structures, systemic barriers, and policy impacts.

### **Findings**

#### **➤ Research Question 1: How is teacher leadership conceptualized and practiced in Indian schools?**

Teacher leadership in India is conceptualized as both a formal and informal process through which teachers influence instructional practices, institutional culture, and school improvement initiatives. While global scholarship defines teacher leadership

as the ability of teachers to extend their influence beyond classroom instruction (York-Barr & Duke, 2004), the Indian conceptualization is shaped by socio-cultural, administrative, and policy contexts. Traditionally, Indian schools functioned within centralized and hierarchical administrative frameworks. Leadership authority was vested primarily in principals and senior management committees. Teachers were largely positioned as implementers of curricula developed by external bodies such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). In such settings, teacher leadership was neither formally recognized nor structurally embedded.

However, contemporary reforms—especially under the National Education Policy (NEP 2020)—have redefined teachers as active agents of change rather than passive executors of policy (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020). Teacher leadership is increasingly conceptualized around the following dimensions:

- **Instructional Leadership** – Teachers lead curriculum adaptation, innovative pedagogy, and assessment reforms within classrooms and departments.
- **Mentorship and Peer Coaching** – Experienced teachers mentor novice educators, particularly in private schools and central schools.
- **Collaborative Decision-Making** – Teachers participate in school development planning committees.
- **Community Engagement Leadership** – Teachers lead outreach initiatives and parent engagement activities, particularly in rural government schools.

In urban private schools and central government institutions, formal teacher leadership roles such as academic coordinators, subject heads, and curriculum leaders are emerging. In contrast, in many state government schools, teacher leadership is often informal and situational, emerging during projects or reforms.

Empirical observations indicate that teacher leadership in India is still personality-driven

rather than system-driven. Teachers with intrinsic motivation, higher qualifications, or external exposure often assume leadership roles. However, systemic embedding of teacher leadership remains uneven.

Thus, teacher leadership in India is evolving from hierarchical compliance toward distributed professionalism, but its realization varies significantly across regions and school types.

➤ **Research Question 2: What professional learning practices support teacher leadership development in India?**

Professional learning practices are central to the development of teacher leadership. In India, these practices have historically been training-oriented rather than leadership-oriented. However, recent reforms indicate a gradual transformation.

• **Traditional In-Service Training**

For decades, teacher development programs were delivered through centralized workshops conducted by District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs). These programs focused primarily on subject knowledge and curriculum updates. Although beneficial in enhancing content expertise, they did not explicitly cultivate leadership competencies such as collaboration, mentoring, or innovation.

• **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

NEP 2020 mandates 50 hours of CPD annually, institutionalizing sustained professional growth. This shift recognizes that leadership skills develop through continuous reflection, practice, and engagement rather than one-time training sessions.

CPD programs increasingly incorporate:

- Reflective journaling
- Classroom-based action research
- Peer observations
- Mentorship models

Such approaches encourage teachers to take ownership of professional learning, thereby fostering leadership capacities.

• **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

PLCs represent one of the most effective mechanisms for teacher leadership development. They are collaborative groups where teachers collectively analyze student performance, share instructional strategies, and design interventions. According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), PLCs enhance shared responsibility and distributed leadership.

In India, PLCs are more prominent in progressive private schools and institutions supported by educational NGOs. Teachers within PLCs assume facilitative roles, coordinate meetings, and mentor colleagues—thereby exercising leadership.

• **Digital Learning Platforms**

Digital platforms such as DIKSHA enable large-scale teacher learning. Online certification programs, webinars, and collaborative forums expand access to professional development. These platforms empower teachers in remote areas to connect with peers and experts.

However, disparities in internet connectivity and digital literacy create inequities in participation. Despite these limitations, digital learning has emerged as a transformative tool for leadership development.

• **Peer Mentoring and Action Research**

Peer mentoring encourages experienced teachers to guide novices, enhancing leadership through relational influence. Action research projects further promote teacher agency by enabling educators to investigate classroom challenges and implement context-specific solutions.

Overall, professional learning practices that are collaborative, sustained, reflective, and context-sensitive are most conducive to nurturing teacher leadership in India.

➤ **Research Question 3: What challenges hinder effective teacher leadership in India?**

Although teacher leadership is increasingly recognized, multiple barriers impede its realization.

• **Hierarchical Organizational Structures**

Many Indian schools continue to operate within centralized governance systems.

Decision-making authority is often restricted to principals and management committees. Teachers may feel reluctant to challenge established norms or propose innovations due to hierarchical culture.

- **Administrative and Non-Teaching Duties**  
Teachers in government schools frequently perform duties unrelated to instruction, including election supervision, census surveys, and administrative reporting. These responsibilities limit time available for collaborative professional engagement and leadership activities.

- **Resource Inequality**  
India's educational landscape is characterized by significant disparities between urban and rural schools. Limited infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate teaching materials restrict opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

- **Examination-Oriented System**  
The emphasis on board examinations and standardized testing narrows curricular flexibility. Teachers may prioritize syllabus completion over experimentation, thereby limiting leadership expression.

- **Insufficient Leadership Training**  
Teacher education programs regulated by the National Council for Teacher Education primarily focus on pedagogy and subject knowledge. Leadership development, conflict resolution, and collaborative skills are often underemphasized.

- **Cultural Norms**  
Respect for authority and seniority is deeply embedded in Indian culture. While these values promote discipline, they may discourage open dialogue and shared leadership.

These challenges indicate that teacher leadership is influenced not only by individual competencies but also by structural, cultural, and systemic conditions.

➤ **Research Question 4: How does the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 influence teacher leadership and professional learning in India?**

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) marks a transformative moment in India's

educational history by redefining the professional identity and role of teachers. Unlike earlier policy frameworks that primarily emphasized access, enrollment, and regulatory compliance, NEP 2020 places teachers at the center of educational reform. It recognizes teachers not merely as classroom instructors but as nation-builders, curriculum designers, innovators, and leaders of pedagogical transformation. This shift significantly influences both teacher leadership and professional learning practices in India.

One of the most important contributions of NEP 2020 is its emphasis on professional autonomy. The policy advocates reducing rigid administrative controls and enabling teachers to adapt curriculum and pedagogy according to local contexts and student needs. Autonomy is a foundational condition for leadership. When teachers are trusted to make instructional decisions, they are more likely to experiment with innovative strategies, mentor peers, and initiate school-level improvements. Thus, NEP 2020 creates a policy environment conducive to distributed leadership.

Another major influence is the proposal for National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). These standards aim to clearly define competencies expected at different career stages, including mentoring ability, collaboration skills, and innovation. By embedding leadership competencies within professional standards, the policy institutionalizes teacher leadership rather than treating it as an optional or informal activity. This move aligns professional advancement with demonstrated leadership capacity, encouraging teachers to actively engage in school development initiatives.

The policy also mandates a minimum of 50 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) annually for every teacher. This requirement signals a shift from episodic, one-time training workshops to sustained professional learning. Continuous professional development strengthens leadership in several ways:

- It encourages reflective practice and self-evaluation.
- It promotes collaboration through workshops and peer discussions.
- It keeps teachers updated on pedagogical innovations and digital tools.
- Sustained professional learning equips teachers with the confidence and competence required to lead instructional change.

NEP 2020 further introduces the concept of school complexes or clusters; wherein neighboring schools collaborate and share resources. This structural reform expands opportunities for inter-school collaboration and peer mentoring. Teachers can assume leadership roles across institutions, facilitating knowledge exchange and innovation beyond individual schools. Such collaborative ecosystems naturally nurture distributed leadership models.

The policy also emphasizes technology integration in education. Digital platforms for teacher training, resource sharing, and certification increase access to professional development opportunities. Teachers in remote areas can participate in webinars, online courses, and professional forums, thereby enhancing their leadership capabilities. Technology thus becomes both a tool for learning and a medium for collaboration.

Moreover, NEP 2020 advocates career progression pathways linked to merit and performance rather than seniority alone. Leadership contributions, professional development engagement, and innovation are expected to influence promotions and recognition. This shift from tenure-based progression to competency-based progression incentivizes teachers to actively participate in leadership roles.

However, while NEP 2020 provides a progressive framework, challenges remain in implementation. Education in India is a concurrent subject, meaning both central and state governments share responsibility. Variations in funding, administrative efficiency, and political priorities across states affect the pace and depth of

implementation. Rural schools, in particular, may face infrastructural constraints that limit the policy's impact.

In summary, NEP 2020 significantly influences teacher leadership and professional learning by promoting autonomy, establishing professional standards, mandating continuous development, encouraging collaboration, integrating technology, and linking leadership to career progression. While policy vision is strong, effective implementation requires sustained support, monitoring, and capacity building.

#### ➤ **Research Question 5: What strategies can enhance teacher leadership across diverse Indian contexts?**

Enhancing teacher leadership in India requires a comprehensive approach that addresses structural, cultural, professional, and technological dimensions. Given the diversity of Indian schools—ranging from well-resourced urban private institutions to under-resourced rural government schools—strategies must be context-sensitive and adaptable.

#### **1. Institutionalizing Distributed Leadership**

Schools should formally recognize teacher leadership roles such as instructional coaches, department heads, professional learning coordinators, and mentoring leaders. Clearly defined roles legitimize teacher authority and clarify expectations. Distributed leadership reduces over-reliance on principals and encourages collective responsibility for school improvement.

#### **2. Integrating Leadership Development in Teacher Education**

Teacher preparation programs regulated by the National Council for Teacher Education should include modules on leadership theory, conflict management, collaborative planning, and action research. Pre-service exposure to leadership responsibilities prepares teachers to assume such roles early in their careers.

#### **3. Strengthening Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

Professional Learning Communities should be institutionalized across schools. Allocating structured time within school schedules for collaborative meetings allows teachers to analyze student data, share best practices, and co-design interventions. PLCs create safe spaces for dialogue and peer mentorship, which are essential for leadership development.

#### **4. Reducing Administrative Burden**

Teachers often engage in non-teaching duties that reduce time for professional growth. Policy measures should minimize non-academic responsibilities to allow teachers to focus on instructional leadership and collaboration.

#### **5. Investing in Digital Infrastructure**

To ensure equitable professional learning opportunities, rural and underserved schools require improved internet connectivity, digital devices, and training in digital literacy. Digital platforms can connect teachers across regions, enabling shared leadership networks.

#### **6. Establishing Incentive and Recognition Systems**

Recognition plays a vital role in motivating teachers. Awards, fellowships, grants for innovation, and public acknowledgment of teacher-led initiatives encourage leadership engagement. Linking promotions to demonstrated leadership contributions further strengthens motivation.

#### **7. Promoting Action Research and Reflective Practice**

Encouraging teachers to conduct classroom-based research empowers them to identify problems, implement solutions, and evaluate outcomes. Action research fosters ownership and builds evidence-based leadership.

#### **8. Cultivating Collaborative School Culture**

Structural reforms alone are insufficient without cultural transformation. Schools must foster trust, open communication, and shared vision. Principals play a crucial role in creating supportive environments where teachers feel valued and empowered to lead.

#### **9. Ensuring Policy-Implementation Alignment**

Strategies must bridge the gap between policy intent and school-level reality. Monitoring mechanisms, professional mentoring, and capacity-building workshops ensure that reforms translate into practice.

#### **10. Addressing Regional Diversity**

India's socio-cultural and economic diversity requires differentiated approaches. Urban schools may focus on innovation and global competencies, while rural schools may prioritize foundational literacy and community engagement leadership. Contextual adaptation enhances effectiveness.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal that teacher leadership in India is undergoing a gradual but significant transformation. Historically embedded within centralized and hierarchical school governance structures, the role of teachers has traditionally been limited to classroom instruction and curriculum implementation. However, contemporary reforms, particularly under the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), signal a paradigmatic shift toward teacher empowerment, professional autonomy, and distributed leadership.

The discussion of findings can be organized around three central themes: evolving conceptualization of teacher leadership, the role of professional learning practices, and systemic challenges affecting implementation.

#### **1. Evolving Conceptualization of Teacher Leadership**

The study demonstrates that teacher leadership in India is transitioning from informal and personality-driven practices to more structured and policy-supported frameworks. Traditionally, leadership was associated primarily with administrative roles such as principals or headmasters. Teachers were expected to follow prescribed curricula designed by national bodies such as the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). Decision-making authority remained centralized, limiting teacher agency.

However, contemporary educational discourse emphasizes distributed leadership, where leadership responsibilities are shared among members of the school community (Spillane, 2006). In Indian schools—especially private and autonomous institutions—teachers increasingly participate in curriculum planning, peer mentoring, and school improvement initiatives. This shift aligns with global trends that recognize teachers as instructional leaders rather than passive implementers.

Despite this progress, the transformation remains uneven. Urban schools with better infrastructure and supportive leadership structures demonstrate higher levels of teacher-led innovation. In contrast, rural and government schools often continue to function within rigid bureaucratic frameworks. Thus, while conceptual understanding of teacher leadership has evolved, practical implementation varies significantly across contexts.

## **2. Professional Learning as a Catalyst for Leadership**

The findings highlight that professional learning practices play a crucial role in enabling teacher leadership. Traditional in-service training models, characterized by one-time workshops, have limited impact on sustained instructional change. In contrast, collaborative models such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), peer mentoring, and action research promote reflective practice and shared accountability.

The mandate of 50 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) under NEP 2020 institutionalizes ongoing professional growth. Continuous engagement fosters confidence, pedagogical innovation, and leadership competence. Teachers who participate in collaborative inquiry processes are more likely to initiate school-level improvements and mentor colleagues.

Digital platforms further expand opportunities for professional learning. Online courses and webinars provide access to updated pedagogical research and cross-regional collaboration. However, the digital

divide remains a major concern, particularly in rural areas with limited connectivity.

Overall, the discussion indicates that professional learning is not merely a supplementary activity but a foundational mechanism for leadership development. Sustained, collaborative, and context-sensitive professional learning practices are essential for nurturing teacher leadership.

## **3. Structural and Cultural Barriers**

Despite policy advancements, systemic challenges continue to impede teacher leadership. Hierarchical school cultures discourage shared decision-making. Teachers often lack autonomy to adapt curriculum or assessment methods. Administrative workloads and non-teaching duties further reduce opportunities for collaboration.

Cultural norms emphasizing seniority and authority may inhibit open dialogue and innovation. Additionally, resource disparities between states and districts create inequitable conditions for leadership development. These structural and cultural barriers suggest that teacher leadership requires not only policy endorsement but also organizational and cultural transformation.

In summary, the discussion reveals that teacher leadership in India is supported at the policy level but constrained at the operational level. Bridging this gap requires systemic reforms, institutional restructuring, and sustained professional support.

## **Implications**

The findings of this study have significant implications for policy-makers, school administrators, teacher education institutions, and researchers.

### **1. Policy Implications**

The recognition of teachers as central agents of change under NEP 2020 carries profound implications for educational governance. Policy frameworks must move beyond rhetorical endorsement of teacher empowerment toward concrete structural reforms.

First, the development and implementation of National Professional Standards for

Teachers should explicitly incorporate leadership competencies. Leadership should not be treated as an optional skill but as a core professional requirement.

Second, policies must allocate adequate financial resources for professional development initiatives. Mandating CPD without sufficient funding risks superficial compliance rather than meaningful engagement.

Third, monitoring mechanisms should ensure equitable implementation across states. Regional disparities in infrastructure and administrative capacity must be addressed to prevent uneven progress.

## **2. Institutional Implications**

School-level leadership plays a critical role in fostering teacher agency. Principals must adopt facilitative rather than authoritative leadership styles. Creating spaces for teacher voice in decision-making processes enhances ownership and accountability.

Institutions should:

- Establish teacher leadership committees.
- Allocate structured time for collaborative planning.
- Encourage peer mentoring systems.
- Performance appraisal systems should recognize leadership contributions such as mentoring, curriculum innovation, and action research.

## **3. Implications for Teacher Education**

Teacher education programs regulated by the National Council for Teacher Education must integrate leadership development into pre-service and in-service curricula. Courses on collaborative leadership, communication skills, conflict resolution, and educational change management should be included.

Embedding leadership training at the preparation stage ensures that teachers enter the profession with a leadership mindset rather than acquiring it incidentally.

## **4. Technological Implications**

Digital platforms offer transformative potential for professional learning and leadership networking. However, technological solutions must be accompanied by infrastructure development and digital literacy training.

The integration of technology should aim not only at content delivery but also at collaborative engagement through online communities and discussion forums.

## **5. Research Implications**

The limited empirical research on teacher leadership in India suggests the need for further studies. Future research should explore:

- Comparative analyses across states.
- Longitudinal impact of PLCs on student achievement.
- Gender dimensions of teacher leadership.
- Rural-urban differences in leadership practices.
- Expanding the evidence base will support informed policy decisions and targeted interventions.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and implications, several strategic recommendations are proposed to strengthen teacher leadership in India.

### **1. Institutionalize Distributed Leadership Structures**

Schools should formally designate teacher leadership roles such as instructional coaches, curriculum coordinators, and mentoring leaders. Clear role definitions legitimize teacher authority and foster accountability.

### **2. Provide Dedicated Time for Collaboration**

Collaborative leadership cannot flourish without structured time. School schedules should include regular slots for PLC meetings, peer observations, and joint planning sessions.

### **3. Reduce Administrative Burden**

Policy-makers should minimize non-academic responsibilities assigned to teachers. Reducing administrative workload allows teachers to focus on instructional leadership and professional learning.

### **4. Strengthen Continuous Professional Development**

CPD programs should be sustained, context-specific, and reflective. Workshops must

include follow-up sessions and mentoring support to ensure long-term impact.

### **5. Promote Action Research**

Encouraging teachers to conduct classroom-based research fosters reflective practice and problem-solving skills. Small grants and recognition for teacher-led research projects can motivate participation.

### **6. Develop Leadership Pathways**

Clear career progression pathways linked to demonstrated leadership competencies should be established. Merit-based advancement encourages teachers to assume leadership roles proactively.

### **7. Enhance Rural Infrastructure**

Investing in digital connectivity, libraries, and teaching resources in rural schools ensures equitable leadership opportunities across regions.

### **8. Foster Collaborative School Culture**

Cultural transformation is essential. Principals should model trust, openness, and shared vision. Leadership development programs for school heads can support this cultural shift.

### **9. Establish Recognition and Incentive Mechanisms**

Awards, fellowships, and public acknowledgment of teacher-led innovations promote motivation and professional pride.

### **10. Align Policy and Practice**

Continuous dialogue between policy-makers and practitioners ensures that reforms remain grounded in classroom realities. Feedback loops should inform ongoing policy adjustments.

## **CONCLUSION**

The discussion, implications, and recommendations presented in this section underscore that teacher leadership in India is both an emerging opportunity and a systemic challenge. Policy reforms such as the National Education Policy provide a visionary framework for teacher

empowerment. However, translating this vision into practice requires structural restructuring, professional capacity building, cultural transformation, and sustained investment.

Teacher leadership is not an isolated reform but a comprehensive professional shift toward shared responsibility, collaborative inquiry, and instructional innovation. By aligning policy initiatives, institutional practices, and professional development systems, India can cultivate a robust culture of teacher leadership that enhances educational quality and equity nationwide

### **Declaration by Authors**

**Acknowledgement:** None

**Source of Funding:** None

**Conflict of Interest:** No conflicts of interest declared.

## **REFERENCES**

1. DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). Professional learning communities at work. Solution Tree.
2. Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership as distributed leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, 23(3), 313–324.
3. Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(1), 112–129.
4. Ministry of Education. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Government of India.
5. Spillane, J. P. (2006). Distributed leadership. Jossey-Bass.
6. York-Barr, J., & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? *Review of Educational Research*, 74(3), 255–316.
7. National Council for Teacher Education. (1993). NCTE Act. Government of India.
8. National Council of Educational Research and Training. (1961). About NCERT. Government of India.
9. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Government of India.

How to cite this article: Ajaypal Singh, Poonampreet Kaur. Teacher leadership and professional learning practices: an Indian perspective. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2026; 13(4): 568-577. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20260459>

\*\*\*\*\*