

**EXPLORING PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP IN  
EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS: A SYSTEMATIC  
LITERATURE REVIEW**

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**Abstract:**

Pedagogical leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of teaching and learning within educational institutions. This paper presents a systematic literature review spanning from 2017 to 2021, aiming to elucidate the diverse characteristics and dimensions of pedagogical leadership as delineated within international academic discourse. Drawing from reputable databases such as Web of Science (WoS), EBSCO, and SCOPUS, this study synthesizes insights from scholarly articles to provide a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical leadership. The analysis encompasses definitions, conceptual frameworks, educational challenges, study objectives, search methodologies, key findings, discussions, implications, and conclusions. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of pedagogical leadership and its significant impact on teaching, learning, and educational outcomes. Moreover, the study highlights the need for further research to develop robust instruments for measuring and operationalizing pedagogical leadership in diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Pedagogical leadership, educational leadership, systematic literature review, teaching and learning, educational outcomes, leadership paradigms, teacher development, instructional effectiveness, professional growth, educational challenges.

## **Introduction**

Educational leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of teaching and learning within schools (Contreras, 2016). Despite its predominantly indirect influence, educational leadership stands as the second most significant factor impacting student learning outcomes, following classroom instruction, with particularly profound effects observed in low-performing schools (Day et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004). Within the realm of educational leadership, the concept of pedagogical leadership has garnered increasing attention, primarily centered on enhancing the core activities of teaching and learning. Pedagogical leadership intersects with various dimensions of educational practice, including teacher development (Berestova et al., 2020a), teacher competency (Berestova et al., 2020a; Manuel Roca-Piloso & Anibal Alonso Betancourt, 2020), pedagogical models (Andrews & Abawi, 2017), and teacher leadership (Ho, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004). Moreover, as scholars delve deeper into this domain, additional facets of pedagogical leadership, such as its role in fostering teacher collaboration and instructional innovation, continue to emerge (Gonzalez Fernandez et al., 2019). However, despite burgeoning scholarly interest, the concept remains somewhat nebulous, prompting ongoing efforts to elucidate its underlying principles and implications (Male & Palaiologou, 2015). Given the evolving nature of pedagogical leadership and the quest for greater conceptual clarity, this research endeavors to conduct a systematic literature review spanning the last five years, exploring diverse characteristics and dimensions of pedagogical leadership elucidated within international academic discourse.

## **Definition and Conceptual Framework**

Pedagogical leadership, broadly defined, encompasses leadership actions aimed at facilitating the teaching and learning process within educational settings (Contreras, 2016). Within scholarly discourse, pedagogical leadership often intersects with other leadership paradigms, including instructional leadership (Moral, 2018; Stein & Nelson, 2003), distributed leadership (Jappinen & Maunonen-Eskelinen, 2012; Yang & Lim, 2020), transformational leadership (Rojas Carrasco et al., 2020), and professional learning communities (Vijayadevar et al., 2019).

At its core, pedagogical leadership merges the principles of pedagogy, which encompass the knowledge, philosophy, and practices underlying the learning process, with leadership, which involves guiding individuals or organizations towards achieving specific goals. Therefore, pedagogical leadership entails leading educators to enhance their teaching and learning practices, ultimately contributing to the delivery of quality education.

While some scholars perceive pedagogy and instruction as largely synonymous (Andrews & Abawi, 2017; Carlsson, 2021), others emphasize distinctions between the two domains. For instance, pedagogical tasks are often associated with values and norms, whereas instructional tasks focus on imparting knowledge and skills (Manuel Roca-Piloso & Anibal Alonso Betancourt, 2020; Farrell, 2017; Stein & Nelson, 2003). Additionally, pedagogical leadership is distinguished from instructional leadership, which typically involves the management of curriculum and instruction by school principals (Muli et al., 2017; Carlsson, 2021).

In practice, pedagogical leadership entails supporting classroom teachers in implementing curriculum effectively (Ho, 2010), while also assuming diverse roles and functions within educational organizations (Glickman & Burns, 2020).

### **Addressing Educational Challenges**

One of the predominant challenges confronting the global education landscape is the need to transcend the limitations of a monolithic educational model (Rogers & Grunewald Nichele, 2020). Research focusing on cross-cultural perspectives assumes paramount importance in this regard, as it offers insights into diverse approaches adopted by nations and cultures to structure their formal education systems and attain educational excellence (Garba et al., 2015).

Furthermore, stakeholders often advocate for transformative measures within educational institutions (Gonzalez-Fernandez et al., 2020). Conventional public schooling has drawn criticism for its perceived rigidity and teacher-centric approach (Manuel Roca-Piloso & Anibal Alonso-Betancourt, 2020). School leaders face the formidable task of striking a balance between conceptual responsibilities, instructional leadership, and administrative duties (Bond & Giles, 1997; Muli et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, there remains a pressing need to conceptualize and comprehend the implications of pedagogical leadership fully. This necessitates an initial exploration of the constituents of pedagogical leadership within the existing body of knowledge and an examination of how pedagogical leadership can influence teachers' professional growth, instructional effectiveness, and ultimately, student outcomes.

### **Study Objective**

In light of the preceding discussions, this paper aims to explore diverse scholarly articles on pedagogical leadership, with a particular focus on its pivotal role in facilitating effective teaching and learning practices. It will encompass an examination of the insights gleaned from empirical research to inform the development of a model that holds relevance within educational contexts. Consequently, the primary research question guiding this inquiry is formulated as follows:

What are the key components of pedagogical leadership as delineated in recent articles sourced from online databases such as Web of Science (WoS), EBSCO, and SCOPUS?

### **Search Methodology (PICO Method):**

The PICO Method, recognized for its problem-based approach, was utilized for conducting a systematic literature review. PICO stands for Population, Intervention, Control, and Outcome. In this study, the Population consisted of educational journal articles published in reputable peer-reviewed databases. The Intervention focused on exploring the impact of pedagogical leadership on teaching and learning, while articles from predatory journals were excluded. The Outcome sought to identify various aspects such as the meaning, process, characteristics, and domains of pedagogical leadership. Search criteria included specific keywords, publication years (2017-2021), geographic regions, research methodologies, language (English), and availability of full text and references.

## **Summary of Search Results:**

The search yielded results from three prominent online databases: Web of Science Core Collection (WoS), Education Research Complete @EBSCOhost, and SCOPUS. Notable journals were identified across all sources, covering diverse topics related to educational leadership and pedagogy. The publications were geographically diverse, spanning regions such as the United States, Finland, the United Kingdom, and others. The years of publication ranged from 2017 to 2021, with a significant number of articles published in 2019. The search results provided valuable insights into the current state of research on pedagogical leadership practices worldwide.

## **Key Findings:**

Recent studies spanning from 2017 to 2021 have extensively explored the concept of pedagogical leadership (PL), emphasizing its theoretical, conceptual, and empirical dimensions. Scholars have predominantly defined pedagogical leadership as a collaborative process encompassing planning, decision-making, action, and evaluation, with the aim of defining shared goals for schools and improving access to high-quality educational opportunities for all students. This collaborative approach underscores the importance of the educational community's commitment to professional development opportunities for teachers.

Pedagogical leadership is often associated with distributed, participative, and situated types of leadership, yet there remains a lack of clear conceptualization in some studies. It is sometimes perceived as overlapping with other leadership types such as instructional, transformational, distributed, and situational leadership. Despite its elusive nature, scholars recognize the need for further exploration of the relationship and impact between leadership and pedagogy.

Analysis of 33 articles resulted in 335 codes, with a rigorous iterative coding process reducing them to 32 distinct and non-overlapping codes relevant to the research question. Inter-coder reliability tests conducted among three experts in education demonstrated substantial agreement, as

indicated by Cohen’s Kappa Statistic readings ranging from 0.71 to 0.78. The selected codes were grouped into three major themes and corresponding subthemes, providing insights into the multifaceted nature of pedagogical leadership. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of pedagogical leadership and its implications for educational practice.

Table 3: Results from Intercoder Reliability Test

Inter-coder Agreement	Cohen’s Kappa Statistic	Strength of Agreement
IC1 and IC2	0.73	Substantial
IC1 and IC3	0.78	Substantial
IC2 and IC3	0.71	Substantial

### **Illustration of Major Themes and Subthemes**

The selected codes, grouped into three major themes and subthemes, are presented in Table 4, showcasing their distribution and density across the selected articles. Each sub-category within these themes represents distinct aspects of pedagogical leadership as identified through the systematic literature review.

The analysis presented in Figures 1, 2 and 3 categorizes the emerged codes into three major themes, each encompassing sub-categories for a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical leadership:

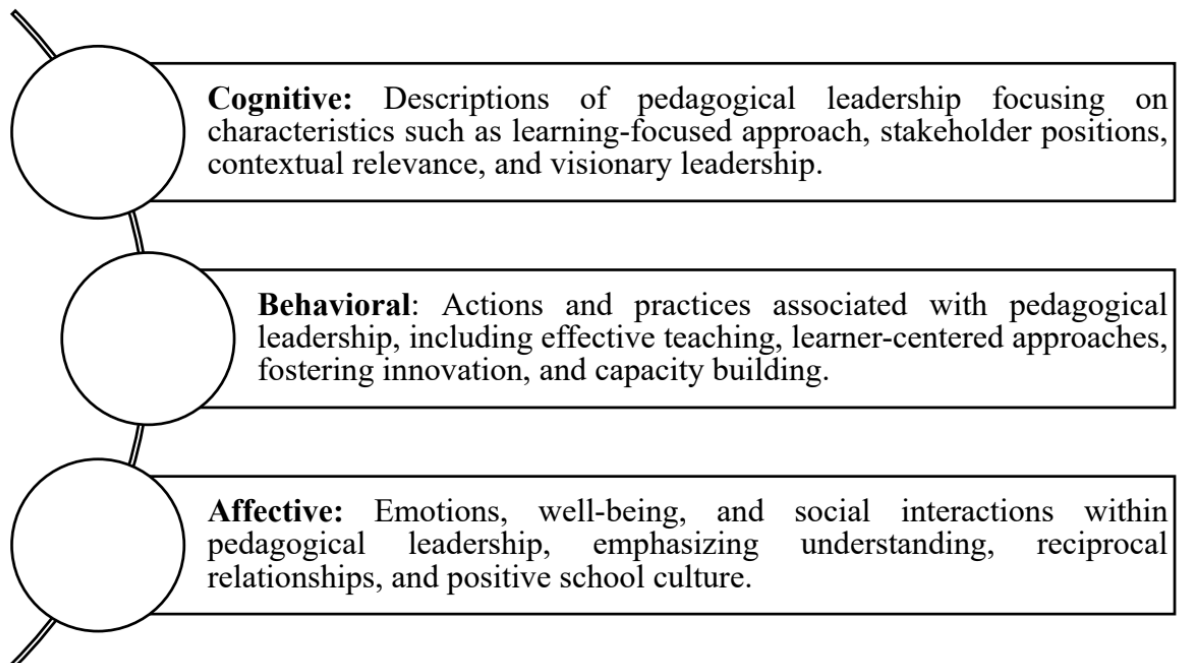
#### **I. Characteristics of Pedagogical Leadership**

Pedagogical leadership is a multidimensional strategy that is critical to the growth and success of educational institutions. This idea may be defined in three dimensions: cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. The cognitive part refers to the intellectual engagement with pedagogical leadership, emphasizing characteristics such as taking a learning-focused approach, evaluating the views of many stakeholders, retaining contextual relevance, and aiming for visionary leadership. These traits are critical for

leaders seeking to negotiate the intricacies of educational institutions and effect substantial change.

The behavioural component includes the practical activities and practices that define instructional leadership. This involves implementing effective teaching practices, adopting learner-centered approaches that address students' needs and potentials, encouraging creativity, and increasing institutional capacity. These strategies help to create an atmosphere that encourages learning and teaching excellence. Meanwhile, the affective domain addresses the emotional and social components of leadership in the educational context. It highlights the significance of promoting understanding, establishing reciprocal connections between educators and students, and creating a healthy school culture that promotes the emotional well being of all stakeholders. These characteristics constitute a complete framework for understanding and executing good educational leadership. Figure 1 summarized the key points as a diagram.

Figure 1: Characteristics of Pedagogical Leadership



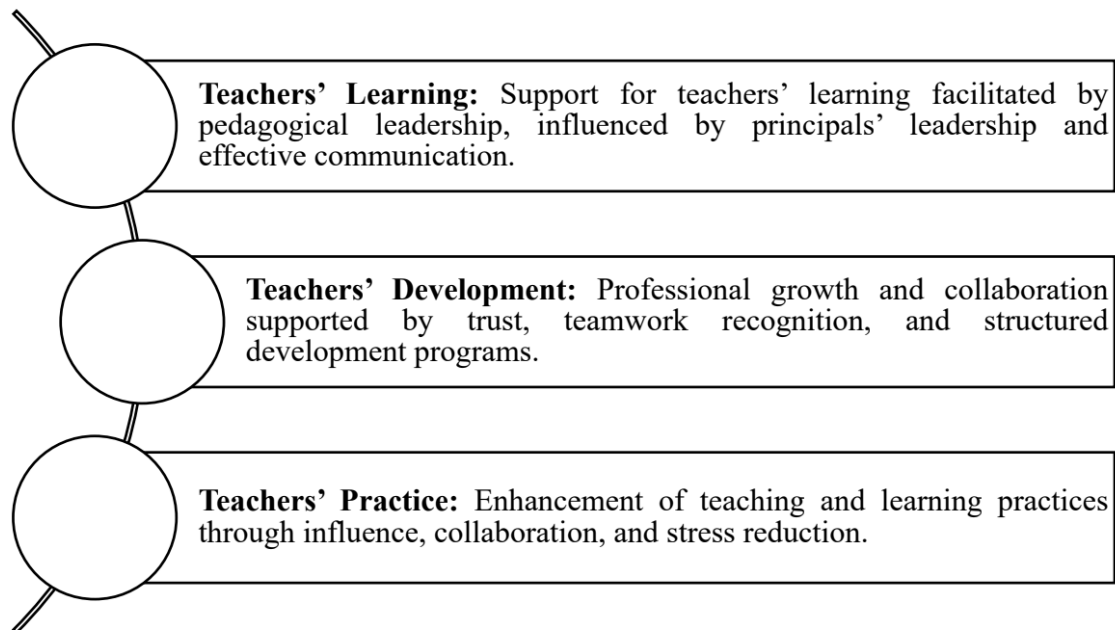


## **II. Enablers of Pedagogical Leadership**

Pedagogical leadership is a multidimensional notion that may be viewed from a variety of perspectives, including cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions. The cognitive side entails a strong emphasis on learning, with leaders prioritizing educational results and knowledge growth. Understanding and embracing stakeholder viewpoints is essential for ensuring that leadership choices and initiatives are relevant and responsive to the educational environment's particular context. Visionary leadership is also essential in this area, driving educational institutions toward forward-thinking objectives and fostering an academic excellence culture.

Pedagogical leadership may be defined as particular activities and practices that have a direct influence on teaching and learning. This involves a dedication to effective teaching approaches and a learner-centered approach that prioritizes students' needs and potential. Such leaders also play an important role in promoting innovation and creativity inside their organizations, pushing instructors and students to try new ideas and techniques. Furthermore, they concentrate on capacity development, which involves improving educators' skills and competences in order to enhance overall educational results. In the emotional dimension, pedagogical leadership stresses the significance of emotions, well-being, and social connections in the educational context. This entails cultivating understanding, empathy, and reciprocal connections among all members of the school community, resulting in a healthy and supportive school culture. This element emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, specifically its influence on building a supportive and motivating educational environment. The following Figure 2 summarized the key points as a diagram.

Figure 2: Enablers of Pedagogical Leadership



### III. Impact of Pedagogical Leadership

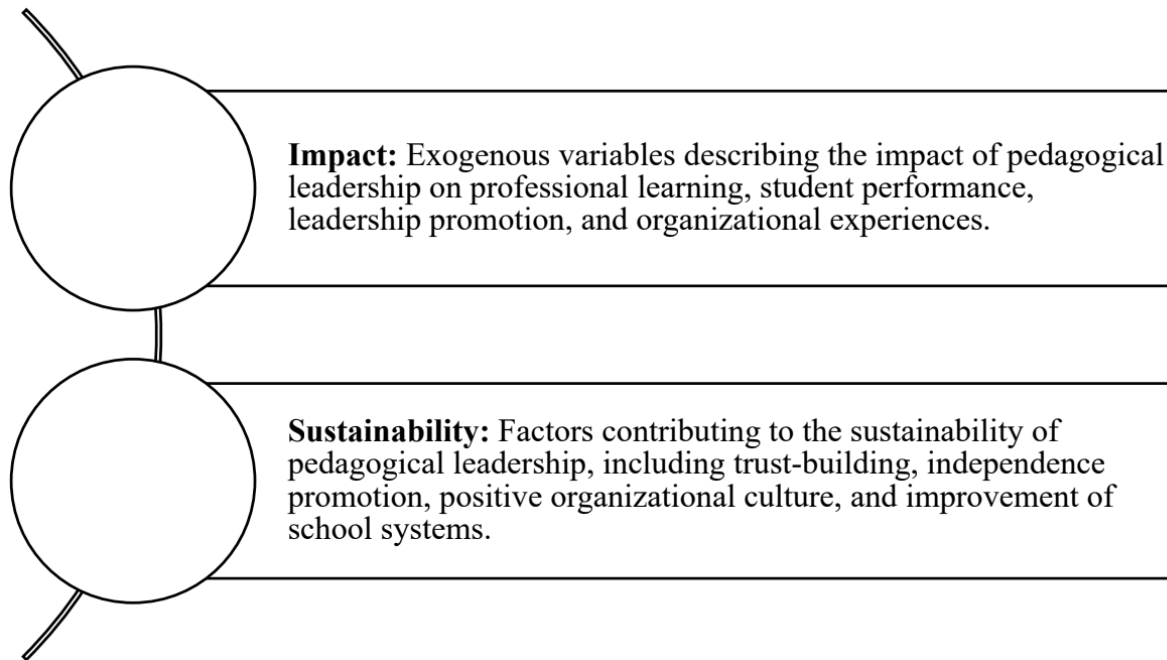
The term of "impact" in pedagogical leadership refers to leadership's effect on numerous external aspects within an educational system. These exogenous factors include improved professional development for educators, which may lead to more effective teaching techniques and practices. Furthermore, the influence on student achievement is an important metric, typically perceived as a direct outcome of the school's teaching and leadership. This area also includes promoting staff leadership and improving overall organizational experiences, demonstrating how pedagogical leadership goes beyond immediate classroom activities to embrace larger organizational transformation and growth.

"Sustainability" in the context of pedagogical leadership refers to the factors that enable the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of leadership methods. Building trust between leaders, staff, and students is essential for establishing a climate that encourages independence and autonomy, resulting in a deeper feeling of agency among educators and learners. A healthy company culture is also important because it develops an engaged and supportive environment that promotes long-term educational achievement. Finally, constant development of school

systems guarantees that pedagogical leadership is sensitive and flexible to the changing demands of the educational environment, ensuring its long-term relevance and effectiveness.

Figure 3 summarized the key points as a diagram.

Figure 3: Impact of Pedagogical Leadership



## Discussions

Analysis of studies on Pedagogical Leadership (PL) within the timeframe of 2017-2021 reveals a relatively smaller volume compared to other leadership domains such as Instructional Leadership, Distributed Leadership, and Transformational Leadership. The data presented in Figures 1, 2 and 3 underscores the emerging nature of PL within the scholarly landscape. International research highlights the significance, effectiveness, and evaluation of PL practices. However, due to its overlap with other leadership types, such as Instructional Leadership and Distributed Leadership, there is a lack of a standardized instrument for measuring PL. Particularly in Asia, literature on PL is scarce in mainstream databases, suggesting a potential need to explore regional and local databases for insights into PL terminology and concepts. Moving forward, future research might employ targeted searches using specific terms to uncover latent discussions on PL within local contexts.

Many findings underscore the importance of PL in impacting student achievement and teachers' professional development. However, there

remains ambiguity regarding the specific dimensions of PL and the lack of discriminant indicators for its measurement. While thematic analyses of reputable journal articles offer initial insights into potential indicators, further refinement and validation by field experts are necessary to develop a robust research instrument for PL. While additional steps and processes are required to operationalize this idea fully, such endeavors fall beyond the scope of this article.

## **Implications**

The examination of Pedagogical Leadership offers valuable insights for school leaders seeking to navigate the complexities of their educational communities and enhance teaching and learning processes. By understanding how school communities learn effectively, leaders can adapt to changing demands and foster greater autonomy, accountability, and stakeholder satisfaction within their institutions. Furthermore, studies in pedagogical leadership underscore the importance of refining strategies for implementing professional development, performance evaluation, and assessment policies across all levels of the organization.

The three identified subthemes, supported by corresponding codes as outlined in Table 3, serve as foundational domains for further exploration and development. It's essential to recognize that while this study adopts a deductive approach rooted in theoretical triangulations, it does not fully encompass the contextual nuances and practical considerations present in educational settings. Nonetheless, these findings offer valuable guidance for the design and validation of future instruments aimed at measuring pedagogical leadership, particularly in terms of content, face, and factor analysis.

For researchers, this study opens avenues for conceptualizing instruments that delve deeper into the domains of Characteristics, Enablers, and Impact of pedagogical leadership. Moving forward, there is a clear need for quantitative explorations aimed at identifying measurable and observable indicators that can provide a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical leadership. Such endeavors will contribute to advancing scholarly discourse and facilitating evidence-based practices in educational leadership.

## Conclusions

Pedagogical leadership emerges as a multifaceted and intricate social process, demanding adaptability, creativity, and community engagement. Effective pedagogical leadership is a continuous journey characterized by ongoing learning, practical application, meaningful interactions, and thoughtful reflections. This article serves as a theoretical compass, offering insights gleaned from a synthesis of existing knowledge on the constituents of pedagogical leadership.

External stakeholders, including parents, government bodies, and private sectors, exert significant influence on the strategic and operational decisions of educational institutions. Concurrently, school leaders wield considerable responsibility in guiding teaching and learning initiatives through pedagogical leadership practices. Their roles encompass supervision, development, and assessment of educators within the unique cultural and contextual framework of their schools.

Despite the evolving landscape of education marked by increasing complexity, autonomy, and accountability, pedagogical leaders must navigate these dynamics adeptly. They must cultivate a collaborative community of leaders capable of shaping the quality of education and driving positive change within their institutions. Given the diverse interpretations of pedagogical leadership, it becomes evident that there is no singular model or approach. Instead, pedagogical leadership demands attributes such as patience, confidence, creativity, and a clear vision for both students and educators. Leaders bear the responsibility of fostering a supportive and empowering environment, where mutual respect and collaboration thrive, transcending traditional power dynamics.

In essence, pedagogical leadership necessitates not only authority but also empathy, understanding, and a commitment to collective goals. By embodying these principles, leaders can inspire and empower their teams to achieve excellence in teaching, learning, and overall educational outcomes.

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