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# Preparing the Next Generation of Educational Leaders: Initiating a Leadership Discourse in Initial Teacher Education

**Daniela Acquaro**

**Abstract:** *Within the context of major international policy reforms impacting on the structure and delivery of initial teacher education, increasing principal attrition, a rise in distributed leadership practice and teacher leadership research, this paper considers the potential of introducing leadership studies to pre-service teachers in their formative education. Utilising a qualitative research design, existing literature is explored which considers the introduction of leadership studies within initial teacher preparation programmes, the prevalence of this practice, and the structure and focus of leadership studies offered. The paper reviews initial teacher education courses offered by top ranking international education universities, revealing a trend in the promotion and attainment of leadership skills and capabilities. The paper also draws upon research within engineering and medicine which have explored the affordances of introducing students to leadership studies prior to entering the profession. It is hoped that this paper will advance educational leadership research by exploring the role of initial teacher education providers in preparing the next generation of school leaders.*

**Keywords:** Educational leadership, leadership preparation, teacher leadership, initial teacher education, pre-service teacher education

## Introduction

Attracting and retaining effective school leaders continues to be a priority across schools internationally (Chapman 2005; OECD 2005, 2012), however, increasing government regulation, accountability, social reform and the marketisation of schools has made this task more difficult (Walker & Qian 2006). As the responsibilities of school leaders are compounded, so are the challenges associated with developing programmes to best prepare them for 21st century schools. Leadership preparation is necessary in some form to ensure individuals have the breadth of understanding to successfully lead schools. Whilst there is

disagreement about what type of preparation is most effective, the fact remains that school leaders are typically appointed following demonstrated leadership capacity often coupled with some type of formal leadership study.

Leadership preparation has traditionally been intended for in-service teachers however it has been argued that certain aspects of leadership training ought to commence from the very beginning of teacher preparation (Campbell-Evans, Stamopoulos & Maloney 2014; Xu & Patmor 2012). Given the changing landscape in schools where organisational and social structures enable greater access to leadership earlier in one's career, there is an opportunity to develop understandings of school leadership during the formative years of teacher training. Initial teacher education programmes should not only focus on certifying graduate teachers as ready to teach, but also provide opportunities to develop some familiarisation of leadership in schools with a view to building greater understanding of the scope of school leadership in order to create a greater pool of aspirant leaders. If our future school leaders are born from the teachers entering the profession, perhaps some thought ought to be given to initiating a leadership discourse prior to entering the academy. Whilst pre-service leadership studies cannot be seen to be all-encompassing leadership preparation, its purpose is to introduce pre-service teachers to leadership early whilst their understanding of the profession is in formation. Exposure to leadership studies can create an awareness of the complexity of contemporary schooling, an appreciation of what it means to be part of an organisation and an introduction to the prospect of leadership in schools and educational settings. Conceptualisations of leadership at the pre-career stage ought to be vastly different to traditional models of leadership development for practicing teachers aspiring to leadership. It is unclear, however, which leadership skills and qualities are required, how they should be best fostered and how widespread this practice of incorporating leadership studies within teacher training programmes actually is.

## **Attracting and Retaining School Leaders**

The importance of the principal's role in schools is undisputed. Of in-school factors, the principal's impact on student learning is second only to classroom instruction (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson 2010). The leadership demonstrated by school principals drives a school, identifying priority areas, establishing goals, initiating improvement programmes, and creating a positive and supportive school environment where students and staff can prosper. With ultimate responsibility for the teaching, learning and wellbeing of students, school principals have been subjected to significant scrutiny which up until recent times has focused exclusively on the role of the teacher.

With increasing pressure to succeed, the desire to lead has decreased across the teaching profession with attrition rates rising (Battle 2010). Although published data revealing the extent of leadership attrition are limited (Buchanan et al. 2013), research has shown that in the US, principals are unlikely to remain in their role for more than four years (Béteille,

Kalogrides & Loeb 2012). Difficulties in attracting and retaining school leaders is particularly evident in rural, remote and disadvantaged areas where resourcing is low and student underachievement is high (Béteille et al. 2012; Louis et al. 2010). The turnover rate for principals in underachieving schools can be as high as 30 percent annually (Béteille et al. 2012) ‘with 35 percent of principals being at their school for less than two years, and only 11 percent of principals being at their school for 10 years or more’ (Levin & Bradley 2019: 3). Underperforming schools not only experience greater principal turnover, but they also struggle to attract experienced new principals when positions arise (Béteille et al. 2012).

Various measures to incentivise aspirant leaders have been offered by governments in the hope of luring them to needy communities. In 2019, an expert advisory panel for rural and regional students in Victoria, Australia conducted a review into how best to improve educational outcomes for rural and regional students. The attraction and retention of principals, teachers, and support staff has been identified as an essential area with \$7 million allocated to fund the employment of executive class principals to take on the most challenging, complex and specialised school leadership roles (Department of Education and Training 2019).

It is important to note that widespread teacher attrition also impacts on the pool of aspirant leaders and creates instability in schools through high teacher turnover. Consistent data have revealed that the teaching profession experiences high levels of attrition in the first five years of teaching, with approximately one-third of new teachers leaving the profession within their first five years in the job (Ingersoll 2001). Heightened pressure attributed to standardised testing and increasing workloads (Mason & Poyatos Matas 2015) have been identified as major contributors to the declining teaching pool. Research suggests that high levels of attrition are in fact impacting on the supply of the next generation of leaders (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff 2005; Bullough & Baughman 1997; Johnson & The Project on the Next Generation of Teachers 2004). Ameliorating this is multi-faceted, however, in part it lies in better preparing graduates for the challenges faced in the profession and the leadership pathways available.

## **The Rise of Distributed Practice**

The practice of distributing leadership is commonplace in schools in many countries and has been evident for some time. As a concept, it is certainly not new. Discourse of its merits gained traction in the early 2000s (Gronn 2000, 2002; Spillane 2006; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond 2001, 2004) and has continued to provide a theoretical exploration of the practice of leading and managing teaching and learning in schools and school systems (Diamond & Spillane 2016). Supovitz et al. (2019: 15) define distributed leadership as ‘a lens to understand a range of activities which contribute to the fulfilling of the organisations mission’. Distributed leadership provides insight into how leadership practice occurs in schools (Gronn 2002; Spillane 2005; Spillane et al. 2001, 2004). Furthermore:

... it provides an organizing principle for selectively involving more members of the school community in the improvement process and, in doing so, gaining both more diverse perspectives into the underlying causes of challenging problems and a shared commitment to the solutions that emerge. (Supovitz et al. 2019: 8)

More often than not, a distributed approach presents a logical solution to the leadership challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century schools in which schools, regardless of size, have a complexity that benefits from leadership by many.

The scope of 21<sup>st</sup> century schools has made the practice of leadership far reaching and complex, so much so that it has become untenable for the principal to singlehandedly lead and manage (Angelle 2010). In addition to responding to the day-to-day needs and demands of staff, students and parents, principals must understand the needs of their school and ensure they are committed to a continuous cycle of improvement. Furthermore, increased accountability coupled with the push and pull of marketisation has set competitive agendas to offer more to prospective students and their families. In an effort to improve the quality of education offered, schools require a leadership framework which ensures multiple agendas can be carried forward. Expecting a school principal to envision, create, carry forward and review all the necessary areas that make a school function is impossible if not detrimental to the school. The complexity of contemporary schools in many countries calls for a shift away from the one leader model to a structure where leadership is both formally and informally shared, enabling focused effort and attention across various facets of the school's operation. The breadth of school leadership demands requires great agility and an openness to a distributed model of operationalising a multi-faceted organisation. Be it through actions or interactions of teachers, distributed leadership practice offers opportunities for teachers to contribute to school improvement. 'A distributed leadership approach fundamentally enhances the improvement process by drawing attention to the participants in the problem identification process, the ways in which solutions are designed, engagement in the ensuing action, and involvement in the after-action review' (Supovitz et al. 2019: 30). Distributed leadership facilitates organisational efficiency and effectiveness with 'empirical evidence to support a strong relationship between distributed patterns of leadership and organisational performance' (Day & Sammons 2013: 35) and a positive influence on teacher effectiveness and student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi 2000).

The rise of distributed practice in schools is also an opportunity to recognise the expertise and contribution of its teachers. A distributed approach generates opportunities to value teacher voice, skills and capabilities by extending the boundaries of leadership through high levels of 'teacher involvement' (Harris & Lambert 2003: 16). Moreover, a distributed framework creates opportunities for teachers to develop and exercise 'expertise, skill and input' (Harris & Lambert 2003: 16) by building capacity. Harris (2014) presents the case for a distributed model of leadership as a means of capacity building. She draws together research to argue that school improvement research has focused on the impact of formal leadership such as the principal, and not acknowledged the opportunities that lie in formal and informal leadership

at other levels present within a school. Creating opportunities for teachers to contribute to wide-ranging school imperatives facilitates efficiency and effectiveness and develops individual and collective skills and capabilities where this would not otherwise have been possible outside of a formal leadership role. Facilitating opportunities for both formal and informal leadership also fosters a collective approach towards school improvement (Leithwood & Riehl 2003). The efficacy of a distributed framework of leadership is evident in leadership research (Harris 2013; Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss 2009) along with the importance of a distributed perspective of leadership practice in working towards school improvement (Hallinger & Heck 2010; Harris 2003, 2014; Leithwood & Mascall 2008; Supovitz et al. 2019). In their study into successful school improvement efforts, Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2001) ranked leadership including distributed leadership as having the greatest impact. Harris (2004: 21) also identified that successful leaders who distribute leadership practice, are more orientated towards relationship building, reciprocal learning and working together to 'generate organizational development and change'.

## Teacher Leadership

Alongside a rise in distributed leadership practice is growing interest into the affordances of teacher leadership. Identified as important key players in school and system improvement (Bierly, Doyle & Smith 2016; Campbell, Lieberman, Yashkina, Alexander & Rodway 2018; Harris et al. 2017; Harris & Mujis 2004), teacher leaders are being recognised for the significant role that they play in instigating, creating and implementing educational change (Harris & Jones 2019). A *teacher leader* is:

... increasingly, serving as a cornerstone of a well-functioning school system, especially given the ever-evolving demands of the education profession, such as more rigorous standards, high-stakes federal and state achievement mandates, increasingly diverse student populations, greater numbers of school-aged children living in poverty, and the hyper pace of technological change. (ASCD 2015: 7)

The central tenet of teacher leadership is that teachers become 'co-constructors of educational change and key contributors to policy making' (Harris & Jones 2019: 123). Where traditional conceptions of leadership and leadership practice rely on formal roles in vertical hierarchical structures, teacher leadership foregrounds disciplinary and instructional expertise and a deep desire to work collectively to improve student learning. Teacher leadership 'is a strategy that can be used to address key teaching and learning challenges; promote sustainable, long-term school improvement; and strengthen the teaching profession overall' (Teacher Leadership Toolkit 2.0 2019: 4). Teacher leadership utilises the unique skills and capabilities of teachers across educational settings to influence school transformation and broader educational change (Harris et al. 2017; Lieberman et al. 2017; York-Barr & Duke 2004). Unlike administrators and school leaders who can be removed from the realities of the classroom and the pressure placed upon teachers and students alike through shifting policy imperatives, teachers offer a valuable perspective when they take on the role of teacher leader. Criticism

levelled against the notion of teacher leader conflates the term with effective teaching. By virtue of their work, teachers plan, prepare and *lead* students in learning. More often than not, their focus is on *their* students and *their* own practice. This is vastly different to the *leadership* practice exhibited by teacher leaders who leverage their expertise to lead initiatives, model exemplary practice and support colleagues towards broader scale improvements. ‘Teacher leadership can leverage the knowledge, skills, and abilities of exemplary teachers to promote meaningful and sustainable change’ (Teacher Leadership Toolkit 2.0 2019: 4). Teacher leaders are ready to influence others and seek opportunities to enhance professional practice and student learning outside of their own classroom.

In an attempt to capture the benefits of teacher leadership, the United States has allocated funding for school districts to create teacher leadership programmes that allow classroom teachers to take leadership roles as instructional coaches, model teachers, and curriculum and professional development leaders, with many still teaching in the classroom (Teacher Leadership Toolkit 2.0 2019). The impetus for the creation of a teacher leadership system is to strengthen instruction and improve student outcomes as well as attract and retain teachers by providing opportunities for collaboration, professional growth and leadership. The promotion of teacher leadership is being recognised for its potential in developing, recruiting and retaining a larger, more effective education workforce (Teacher Leadership Toolkit 2.0 2019).

## Research Focus

Using a qualitative method of inquiry, this study sought to explore the incidence and prevalence of leadership studies across initial teacher education programmes internationally. The research was framed by two broad questions:

- 1) Do initial teacher education courses introduce pre-service teachers to concepts of *leadership*?
- 2) If so, how prevalent is this across the world’s top-ranking Education Universities?

In order to explore this, it was necessary to review existing research into the notion of leadership studies within pre-service teacher education as well as an in-depth look at individual pre-service teacher education programmes. Hence, the data collection was conducted in two stages. Firstly, in order to better understand existing literature in this area, a review of research exploring the inclusion of leadership studies within initial teacher education was conducted. The review was limited to research spanning over the last decade. The search centred on research focused on building leadership capacity amongst pre-service teachers in early childhood centres, and primary and secondary school settings. The second stage of the data collection consisted of an audit of initial teacher education programmes. The sample consisted of initial teacher education programmes offered by the top 20 Universities in Education as per the 2019 QS World Rankings (<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/university-subject-rankings/2019/education-training>). Using the QS world rankings

provided a means of classifying the sample and a selection of 20 universities was within the scope of the project. Each of the 20 university entries provided links to their homepage which were accessed for the search. The web-based review consisted of an exhaustive search through each university website and various initial teacher training programmes to identify the following:

- 1) Is *leadership* a skill or capability developed in the pre-service teacher training which is promoted in the marketing information of the university?
- 2) Are *leadership studies* evident in the initial teacher education programme/s offered by the university?

A review of each university website included a search through early childhood, primary and secondary initial teacher education programmes. All publicly available programme and course subject documentation was accessed. Programme marketing material, programme descriptions, curriculum offerings and subject lists were searched within each course. The subject search included the terms: *leadership*, *leading*, *leader*, and *lead*, followed by a deeper review of the subject content where available. The search sought to identify if specific leadership subjects were offered rather than subjects focused on building skills or capabilities which are often associated with leaders and leadership such as group work, collaboration, critical thinking, etc.

The data gathered from the web-based research of programmes have been collated into a table and are presented in Table 1.

It is important to note that the investigation was limited to publicly available material for the top 20 ranked international Universities in Education. Despite a search across university websites, not all universities provided subject specific information for each course and this is noted in the table of findings. Information across websites may have changed since the audit which was conducted in June 2019.

The terms pre-service teacher education and initial teacher education are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

## Reviewing the Research

An investigation of existing literature exploring leadership studies within pre-service teacher preparation programmes suggests this area of research is still in its infancy. Nonetheless, the body of work emerging offers important insights in considering the early introduction of leadership studies to pre-service teachers. The following section presents a sample of small-scale empirical research and conceptual works that advocate for early introduction of leadership studies in initial teacher education. Following this, some parallels are then drawn to similar research in engineering and medicine.

### **Advocating Leadership Studies Within Initial Teacher Education**

Leadership preparation in initial teacher education is viewed as a strategy to better prepare graduate teachers for teacher leadership. Exposure to leadership studies also develops leadership capacity by encouraging teachers to *step into leadership* earlier when they may not have considered it as well as developing or extending their expertise. An introduction to leadership studies enables teacher graduates to enter the profession understanding the important role of leadership in creating a collaborative approach towards school improvement (Harris et al. 2017; Lieberman et al. 2017; York-Barr & Duke 2004). Lovett (2017) calls for closer attention to be paid to the potential of introducing teachers to conceptions of leaders and leadership earlier. In her research, she advocates for recognition of the importance of teacher leadership and a need to better prepare teachers for this work in educational settings (Lovett 2018). She suggests that although leadership preparation programmes are now being targeted towards middle leaders or aspiring senior leaders, high attrition rates within the teaching profession and a shortfall of leaders warrants a multi-pronged approach. Lovett (2017) found that early career teachers were attracted to notions of leadership which involved collective work utilising expertise to further student learning as opposed to notions of leadership aligned with status and position. Xu and Patmor (2012) also advocate the need to better prepare teachers for teacher leadership in schools. They outline that in addition to leadership focused professional learning for in-service teachers, there is a need to generate insights into teacher leadership within teacher preparation programmes. They suggest that offering a teacher leadership course within initial teacher education programmes will enable graduates to have a better understanding of teacher leadership.

For pre-service teachers to gain leadership skills, there needs to be a shift in their vision and perspectives. The sooner they can move beyond their vision and perspectives, the sooner they can move beyond their student perspective to the teacher perspective or the administrator perspective, the better they can prepare for the teacher leadership responsibility. (Xu & Patmor 2012: 253)

They go on to propose that introducing pre-service teachers to leadership will not only assist them in better understanding the structure in schools but 'also the importance of building trust among school stakeholders' (p. 254). Abidin, Norwani and Musa (2016) outline a quasi-experimental study completed in Malaysia amidst large-scale educational reforms to initial teacher education within the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. They argue that in order to improve the profession, teachers need to be introduced to leadership studies within their initial teacher education. They note that introducing pre-service teachers to leadership studies early on will assist them in the profession and better prepare them for leadership when the opportunity arises. In their study, they developed a leadership module which was taken by a small group of pre-service teachers. The module included elements such as: leadership attributes and skills, organisational development, fostering collaborative culture, and influencing for change. Albeit a very small sample, their preliminary findings show that the pre-service teachers' understandings of leadership were impacted positively

with increased motivation to become role models in leading and influencing others (Abidin et al. 2016).

The largest body of work to emerge is research advocating leadership studies within early childhood education. The importance of effective leadership in delivering quality education and care programmes in early childhood and care settings has been a driver for change in initial teacher education (ACECQA 2017). Developing the next generation of early childhood leaders is seen to be the key to transforming early childhood education. Australia's National Authority for children's education and care state that:

Effective leaders set strategic directions and foster professional values which inform how services operate. They promote a positive workplace culture which allows educators, coordinators and staff members to create and participate in collaborative and reflective learning communities. Positive workplace cultures support educators to learn from each other and develop professionally. Such workplaces welcome new ideas encourage reflection and self-review and motivate educators to pursue continuous improvement. (ACECQA 2017: 5)

Changes to the structure and provision of early childhood education within the Australian context have resulted in the need to build leadership capacity amongst early childhood educators (Campbell-Evans et al. 2014). Research shows that early childhood educators often find themselves in leadership roles within early childhood settings shortly after entering the profession (Hayden 1997; Rodd 1998; Waniganayake, Morda & Kapsalakis 2000) and as a result, leadership education is seen to be an integral part of early childhood initial teacher education programmes (Campbell-Evans et al. 2014). Despite this, there still remains great inconsistency between how leadership is understood and enacted (Nuttall, Thomas & Wood 2014), and how future leaders ought to be best prepared to take on the oversight of early childhood settings. Campbell-Evans et al. (2014: 46) suggest that 'university teacher education courses have a key role to play in clearly articulating and describing roles and responsibilities in relation to both administration and leadership'. Whilst there is great discussion around how best to prepare future leaders, there is recognition of the value of leadership development within early childhood initial teacher education.

### ***The Leadership Gap in Engineering and Medicine***

Research shows that it is not just the teaching profession which is exploring the value of introducing leadership to students prior to entering their profession. There is extensive research advocating for this within the medical and engineering professions. The last decade has seen a steady rise in research into the importance of developing leadership skills in undergraduate engineering students (Cox, Cekic & Adams 2010; Yousefdehi, Alves, Caron & Gopakumar 2017). The call for reforms in engineering education has been made to meet the changing demands of the profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Galloway 2007). 'We are seeing a transition in engineering education from understanding engineers as merely the providers of

technical solutions to engineers as leaders' (Yousefdehi et al. 2017: 1). Incorporating leadership studies in formative engineering programmes is considered to be critical in enabling engineers to function at a professional level (Khattak, Ku & Go 2012). Introducing leadership studies within undergraduate engineering degrees teaches future engineers to identify and assess situations, take initiative, make decisions, be resourceful, flexible and work collegially with others (Khattak et al. 2012). Successful implementation of leadership programmes has been traced across several prestigious US engineering schools with little traction across Europe and Australia (Khattak et al. 2012). In a review of engineering leadership research from 2006-2016, Yousefdehi et al. (2017) identified that whilst there is little agreement on how best to define the concept of engineering leadership and develop leadership skills and capabilities amongst engineering students, there is a growing body of empirical research advocating the importance and relevance of leadership studies in engineering education.

Similarly, medical leadership is recognised as essential for high-quality healthcare (Chen 2018; Rotenstein, Sadun & Jena 2018) however, the development of leadership skills and competencies has not been able to match the technical and academic competencies of doctors. Chen (2018: 66) notes:

Leaders in the medical profession have called for reform in healthcare in response to challenges in the system and improvements in public health. Furthermore, there has been an increased drive to see leadership education for doctors starting earlier and continuing throughout their careers so that they can take on more important leadership roles throughout the healthcare system.

Blumenthal, Bernard, Bohnen and Bohmer (2012: 515) describe the *leadership gap* that exists amongst physicians with deficiencies in 'communication, team building, planning and priority setting, assessing performance, problem solving, and leading'. Their research outlines the need to incorporate systematic leadership studies for doctors during their medical training to better prepare them for clinical leadership responsibilities in the course of their day-to-day clinical practice. Furthermore, they identified that there is a significant decline in institutional physician-leaders and point to leadership training to ensure sufficient numbers of future healthcare leaders. Their research identifies that:

In 1935, 35% of U.S. hospital CEOs were doctors; as of 2008, only 4% of America's roughly 6,500 hospitals were run by physicians—a decline of 90% since 1935. A more systematic approach to leadership development for young trainees would prepare physicians for, and hopefully foster their interest in, mid-level and senior-level hospital management. (p. 515)

Like education, both engineering and medicine are facing changes across their profession and are calling for the inclusion of leadership studies within their pre-service training. Whilst further empirical work is required to identify if exposure to leadership studies in fact builds skills and competencies and better prepares professionals for leadership, there is ample

evidence pointing to the need to consider alternative methods in developing the next generation of leaders through the introduction of leadership studies within pre-service education.

## Leadership in Initial Teacher Education Programmes

The following section presents the findings of an audit of the initial teacher education programmes offered by the top 20 Universities in Education as per the 2019 QS World Rankings. A desktop search was conducted in June 2019 to identify if leadership is a skill or capability developed in the pre-service teacher training which is promoted in the marketing information visible on the university website; and if *leadership studies* are offered in the initial teacher education programme/s offered by the university.

At the time of the search, across the 20 universities, 117 initial teacher education programmes were offered. These typically include the Bachelor of Education, Post Graduate Diploma or Certificate in Education and Master of Teaching programmes. Various Bachelor and Master degrees are also offered including the Bachelor of Arts/Mathematics/Music/Science and the Master of Arts/Early Childhood/Elementary and Secondary Education. There are various subject specialisations which are not counted in the 117 total within the programmes offered. What is common amongst all is that they are all initial teacher education programmes required for teacher certification. It is also interesting to note that the 20 leading Education Universities are spread across six countries: United Kingdom (3), United States (8), Hong Kong (2), Canada (2), Australia (4) and Singapore (1).

**Table 1:** Initial Teacher Education Programme Audit

2019 QS Rank	University	Country	Initial Teacher Education Programme			Leadership promoted in marketing material	Subject handbook available online	Evidence of Leadership Studies offered in ITE programmes
			Undergraduate programme	Postgraduate programme	Internship			
1.	University College London	United Kingdom		X	X	X		
2.	Harvard University	United States		X		X	X	X
3.	Stanford University	United States		X		X	X	X
4.	University of Oxford	United Kingdom		X				
5.	University of Cambridge	United Kingdom		X		X		

6.	The University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong		X		X		
7.	University of Toronto, OISI	Canada		X		X	X	
8.	University of California, Berkeley	United States		X			X	X
9.	Columbia University	United States		X		X	X	
10.	University of California, Los Angeles	United States		X		X	X	
11.	University of Michigan	United States	X	X		X	X	X
12.	The University of Sydney	Australia	X	X		X	X	X
13.	University of British Columbia	Canada	X					
14.	=14. Nanyang Technical University	Singapore	X	X		X	X	X
15.	=14. The University of Melbourne	Australia		X	X		X	X
16.	Monash University	Australia	X	X		X	X	
17.	University of Wisconsin-Madison	United States	X	X		X	X	X
18.	Michigan State University	United States	X			X	X	
19.	The University of Queensland	Australia	X	X		X	X	
20.	The Education University of Hong Kong	Hong Kong	X	X		X	X	X

Table 1 outlines the results of an audit of initial teacher education programmes offered by the top 20 Universities in Education as per the 2019 QS World Rankings. The results show that of the 20 universities, 18 offer post graduate teacher preparation programmes with the top 10 universities only offering post graduate teacher preparation programmes. Subject handbooks and course outlines were not visible for five universities which precluded a search for leadership subjects within their programmes.

A review of website marketing material indicates that 16 of the 20 universities promote leadership as a skill or capability attained through completion of the programme. One can assume that the promotion of leadership development within their initial teacher education programmes is considered to be important in attracting prospective students. The promotion material indicates that graduates will develop leadership skills, equipping them to lead future generations. A sample of statements found across websites includes:

The critical thinking skills we teach you from day one of your PGCE will equip you to lead education for future generations throughout your whole career. (University College London)

The Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) is a nationally renowned 12-month full time program preparing future teacher leaders at the elementary and secondary levels. (Stanford University)

The BEd Early Childhood Education and Special Education Programme will enable graduates to meet the academic qualifications required as kindergarten principals. (The University of Hong Kong)

The program prepares candidates to become outstanding teachers and leaders who consult, critique, create and mobilize educational research. (University of Toronto, OISI)

Training the Next Generation of Leaders in Education. (University of California, Los Angeles)

We develop academic skills alongside character building and leadership skills, with a strong emphasis on values. (Nanyang Technical University)

You will acquire the foundation to move into leadership roles as your career progresses. (Monash University)

The promise of leadership development is visible and very clear in marketing the initial teacher education programmes across 16 of the 20 university websites. This finding contrasts with leadership studies only evident within the programmes of nine universities. A review of the subject offerings identifies very little in terms of core leadership focused material. Early Childhood programmes were more likely to offer leadership focused content. The Education University of Hong Kong and Harvard University had the greatest number of leadership subjects. The Education University of Hong Kong in their Bachelor of Education Early Childhood offer: Leadership, Policy and Innovation; Effective Leadership for Early Childhood Education; Resources Management in Early Childhood Sector and Leadership for Engaging Diversity in Early Years. They also offer a subject in their Master of Teaching called: Teacher Leadership and School Improvement. Similarly, Harvard University subjects include: Leadership in Social-Change Organizations; Managing Financial Resources in Non-profit Organizations; Education Entrepreneurship; Independent Schools: Leadership, Opportunities, Challenges, Equity and Inclusion; Leadership Practicum; Organizing: People, Power, Change; Leading the Profession; and Teacher Empowerment and Activism. The terms *leading*, and *leadership* were commonly used in subject titles such as Leading Literacy, Leading Mathematics, Leadership in Educational Settings and the content of subjects related to leadership within specific content areas or in some cases explicitly to leadership development. Along with the prevalence of the term teacher leadership, the use of instructional leadership was also found across several pre-service programmes.

Leadership subjects offered within the initial teacher education programmes are not evident across all universities within the sample. It is not clear what has motivated some universities to offer leadership focused subjects, but one can only assume that some value has been placed on leadership preparation for the graduate teachers about to embark on a professional career.

## Conclusion

The importance of school leadership is widely recognised and is a priority in educational policy globally (OECD 2012). Leadership ‘plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling’ (Pont, Nusche & Moorman 2008: 9). Leadership has a significant impact on student outcomes and in order for schools to be successful, effective leadership is necessary. Leadership preparation is vital in developing the skills and capabilities required to successfully lead, however leadership preparation has traditionally been targeted at in-service teachers who typically show an interest in formal school leadership roles. Increased responsibilities and accountability in schools have created the need to distribute leadership practice in order to address the needs of complex 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. This shift to distributed practice has created opportunities for teacher leaders at all levels, be it in formal or informal roles. However, teacher preparation programmes have not yet recognised the need to prepare pre-service teachers for leadership opportunities which are now being provided earlier in careers than has been the case previously.

The focus of this study has been to stimulate a leadership discourse in initial teacher education. In considering the changing educational landscape where distributed leadership practice has increased opportunities for teacher leadership, this paper has described how introducing pre-service teachers to leadership during their formative education can have various benefits. The significance of introducing leadership studies in initial teacher education is in developing a profession that enters the workforce with a clear understanding of the value of utilising teacher expertise, developing leadership capacity and working collaboratively for school improvement. Exposure to leadership studies can improve initial teacher perspectives and is important in the creation of a supportive school structure. Teacher graduates entering the profession are not only ready to teach, but equipped with the understanding of how leadership and leading can improve student outcomes.

Research into the world’s leading education universities indicates that the power of leadership is important and clearly this is something that is being explored when marketing initial teacher education programmes to prospective students. This practice is not widespread and further research is required to explore what impact exposure to leadership studies has had on graduates entering the profession.

If we are to positively impact on education, our responsibility lies in ensuring that graduates are not only ready to teach but they are ready for all that the profession offers. Preparing teacher graduates with a positive attitude towards the impact of leading will undoubtedly create a profession that works collaboratively, striving to be better educators, with a broad understanding of schools and the power of leading for improvement. It is hoped that this research expands educational leadership research by exploring the role of initial teacher education providers in preparing the next generation of school leaders.

If we are calling for the professionalisation of teachers, initiating a leadership discourse will develop a stronger profession, open to teacher leadership, supportive of distributed practice and working together towards school and system improvement.

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