# Janni Alho

# Student teachers' leadership development in a Finnish class teacher education-integrated study group





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Esitetään Jyväskylän yliopiston kasvatustieteiden ja psykologian tiedekunnan suostumuksella julkisesti tarkastettavaksi yliopiston Agora-rakennuksen Gamma-salissa AgB222.1 marraskuun 30. päivänä 2024 kello 12.

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#### **ABSTRACT**

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The present thesis examined student teachers' leadership development in initial class teacher education in Finland, focusing specifically on a class teacher education-integrated study group, and applied the socio-cultural theory and social constructivist approach to leadership development. The thesis consists of three sub-studies of which sub-studies I and III examined the student teachers' leadership development in the study group and sub-study II more broadly in the teacher education programme. The participants of the study consisted of 15 student teachers and 3 teacher educators in the study group. The data were collected using semi-structured focus group interviews. Additionally, data included the motivation letters written in the application process to study groups and semi-structured individual interviews of 5 of the 15 student teacher participants. The data were analysed using qualitative problem-driven content analysis in sub-studies I and II, with sub-study II also including typologisation. In sub-study III, the data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The results of this study indicated that, in the study group, student teachers developed leadership competencies towards collaborative leadership in their future professional learning communities and their awareness of the leadership aspect in a teacher's work and professional development. Their leadership development was particularly supported by the study group's daily action and operational culture that applied collaborative and relational leadership, together with shared and reflective peer discussions on leadership. This study identified as development needs of leadership development support in teacher education that student teachers' leadership development in understanding a school organisation and becoming aware of the deeper aspects of leadership was relatively limited, and that they faced challenges in fully recognising their leadership development. Overall, the present thesis suggests a study-groupbased leadership development support approach, increasing the awareness of teachers as leaders and imitating collaborative leadership among peers in a school's professional community, as a potential way of enhancing future teachers' leadership competency and meeting several topical development needs of leadership development support in Finnish teacher education.

Keywords: teacher leadership, teacher leadership competency, teacher leadership development, class teacher education, study group, student teacher

### TIIVISTELMÄ

Alho, Janni

Opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuusosaamisen kehittyminen suomalaiseen luokanopettajakoulutukseen integroidussa opiskeluryhmässä

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Tämä väitöstutkimus tarkasteli luokanopettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuusosaamisen kehittymistä suomalaiseen opettajankoulutukseen integroidussa opiskeluryhmässä kiinnittyen sosiokulttuuriseen teoriaan ja sosiokonstruktivismiin. Väitöskirja koostuu kolmesta osatutkimuksesta, joista osatutkimukset I ja III tarkastelivat johtajuusosaamisen kehittymistä opiskeluryhmässä ja osatutkimus II laajemmin luokanopettajaopinnoissa. Tutkimukseen osallistui 15 opettajaopiskelijaa sekä 3 opettajankouluttajaa, jotka ohjasivat opiskeluryhmää. Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin fokusryhmissä toteutetuilla teemahaastatteluilla. Aineisto sisälsi lisäksi opiskeluryhmän valintaprosessissa kirjoitetut motivaatiokirjeet sekä teemahaastattelumenetelmällä toteutetut yksilöhaastattelut viideltä opiskelijalta. Aineisto analysoitiin laadullisen ongelmalähtöisen sisällönanalyysin avulla osatutkimuksissa I ja II, joista jälkimmäisessä käytettiin lisäksi tyypittelyä, ja laadullisen sisällönanalyysin avulla osatutkimuksessa III. Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että opiskeluryhmä tuki opiskelijoita erityisesti yhteistoiminnallisen johtajuusosaamisen kehittämisessä sekä tietoisuuden vahvistamisessa johtajuuden ulottuvuudesta opettajan työssä ja ammatillisessa kehittymisessä. Opiskelijoiden johtajuuskehittymistä tukivat erityisesti opiskeluryhmän yhteistoiminnallista ja suhdeperustaista johtajuutta tukeva toimintakulttuuri sekä johtajuuteen liittyvät vertaiskeskustelut. Tutkimuksessa tunnistettiin, että opettajankoulutuksessa voisi jatkossa olla syytä vahvistaa tukea opiskelijoiden johtajuusosaamisen kehittymiselle koskien kouluorganisaation ymmärtämistä, tietoiseksi tulemista johtajuuden syvemmistä ulottuvuuksista sekä oman johtajuuskehittymisen tunnistamista. Näihin asioihin liittyvä tuki ja osaamisen kehittyminen oli tämän tutkimuksen mukaan suhteellisen vähäistä. Tässä väitöstutkimuksessa opiskeluryhmä, jossa painotettiin johtajuuskehittymisen näkökulmaa ja jäljiteltiin koulun ammatillisen yhteisön yhteistoiminnallista johtamista, näyttäytyi potentiaalisena tuen muotona vahvistaa tulevien opettajien johtajuusosaamista sekä keinona vastata useaan suomalaisen opettajakoulutuksen kehittämistarpeeseen johtajuuskehittymisen tukea koskien.

Avainsanat: opettajajohtajuus, opettajajohtajuusosaaminen, opettajajohtajuuden kehittyminen, luokanopettajakoulutus, opiskeluryhmä, opettajaopiskelija

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Jyväskylä, October 2024 Janni Alho

#### LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

The present dissertation is based on the following three empirical sub-studies. Copies of these articles can be found as appendices to this dissertation, reprinted with the permission of the publishers.

- Article I Alho, J., Hanhimäki, E., & Eskelä-Haapanen, S. (2023b). Finnish student teachers' perceptions of their leadership development in a study group intervention to enhance their teacher leadership. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*. Advance online publication. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/19427751231200161">https://doi.org/10.1177/19427751231200161</a>
- Article II Alho, J., Hanhimäki, E., & Eskelä-Haapanen, S. (2023a). Student teachers' leadership development in a Finnish class teacher education program. *Journal of Teacher Education and Educators*, 12(2), 151–170.

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- Article III Alho, J., Hanhimäki, E., & Eskelä-Haapanen, S. (2024). Employing relational leadership in teacher education to enhance student teachers' leadership competency [Manuscript under review]. Department of Teacher Education, University of Jyväskylä.

The author of this dissertation is the first author of the three sub-studies. She was responsible for developing the research questions; conducting the data collection, interview transcription and data analysis; reviewing the literature; and writing the manuscripts. The co-authors had advisory roles in the design of the research, data collection and analysis, and in the interpretation of findings. They also provided comments on the three manuscripts.

# **ACRONYMS**

LDT	leadership development for teachers model
PLC	professional learning community
RL	relational leadership model
SCSC	subject-centred socio-cultural approach
TL	teacher leadership study group

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

During last decade, educational organisations both in Finland internationally have been required to deal with various complex and challenging phenomena (e.g., Elomaa et al., 2024; Hanhimäki et al., 2024). Regarding the context of Finland, these phenomena have included both longer-term trends, such as declining PISA scores, and urgent situations resulting from a crisis, such as the transition to remote schooling at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the field of education in Finland seems to be in a kind of critical period. This is broadly related to multidimensionally diversified educational contexts (Jantunen et al., 2022; Roberson & Perry, 2022) that invite and urge educational organisations to genuinely ask and build a vision of what the effective, innovative and sustainable education should look like in this day and the future and who comprise the present and near-future educational communities (see Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024). These perspectives lead to questions of what the educational and other needs of the members of these communities are, such as their needs for and obstacles to belonging and well-being, and what is education's role in considering and fulfilling these needs, as well as its ways of doing so.

The core mission and ultimate goal of educational organisations is student learning (e.g., Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Lahtero et al., 2021). The responsibility of these organisations is to pursue this goal in the midst of complexities (Alava, Kola-Torvinen & Risku, 2024; Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022) and to continuously become involved in building an understanding of how student learning can best be achieved. Naturally, this capacity of educational organisations can be influenced and improved with the support of various factors, such as providing quality teacher preparation (Sahlberg et al., 2021). However, leadership plays a significant role in this capacity building as the action and dimension specifically connected to setting the vision, goals and strategies, as well as engaging the school community to take action for the accomplishment of these (see Yukl, 2013) and as the aspect being multifacetedly related to student learning (Ahtiainen et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2010; Nguyen et al., 2020). Without question, leadership employed by principals and other formal school leaders is important

(Elomaa et al., 2023; Raasumaa, 2010; Yada & Jäppinen, 2022). However, in the midst of the surrounding complexities, topical demands for building a shared vision of the profound aspects of education and the trend of Finnish schools having become broader units (Lahtero et al., 2021; Raasumaa, 2010), leadership by single positional leaders is no longer sufficient (Alava, Kola-Torvinen & Risku, 2024; Yada & Jäppinen, 2022). This results in leadership that is shared, collaborative and collective in nature being required to ensure educational organisations' capability for operating effectively, innovatively and sustainably (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; Yada, 2020). School leadership of this nature is not based on formal roles, although such roles may be included, and is employed by the members of a school's professional learning community in collaboration with each other (e.g., Jäppinen et al., 2016).

In this collaborative leadership employed by a school's professional learning community, the role of teachers as leaders is central (Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Harris & Muijs, 2005) and not just reliant on a few experienced teachers but on every teacher as a member of a professional learning community, including beginning ones. This leads to the following questions: Are teachers sufficiently prepared to take action as leaders from the beginning of their careers, including beyond their classrooms? How does and how should initial teacher education prepare them for successfully employing leadership? Is there a need to improve the leadership development support in teacher education and, if so, how should and could this be achieved?

In the previous literature on teacher leadership and the related competency development, the focus has rarely been on student and novice teachers, although some studies on the topic do exist (see, e.g., Ado, 2016; Bond, 2011; Rutten et al., 2022; Xu & Patmor, 2012). Notably, the existing studies on teacher leadership and the related development have been relatively often, but not exclusively, conducted in the US setting (Muijs & Harris, 2006). However, based on the available information on leadership development support in initial teacher education, scholars have stated that this support is insufficient and should be improved (Bond, 2011; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Murphy, 2005). A limited amount of previous research on and the limited establishment of specific support for leadership development in initial teacher education have probably been connected to scholars and practitioners not having broadly recognised student and novice teachers as potential and real-time leaders (Ado, 2016; Bond, 2011; Rutten et al., 2022) whose leadership competency it is important to enhance in teacher education. Relatedly, there may have been difficulties in specifically understanding what kind of leadership development support is (not) currently provided and should be provided in teacher education. The scarceness in understanding the efficient ways of supporting student teachers' leadership development in teacher education is a matter of concern since it creates a risk of deficiencies in the preparation process of competent future teacher leaders. This, again, may result in educational organisations losing a significant amount of leadership potential that could enable the continuous and sustainable

improvement of their operational effectiveness and innovativeness (see Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

In Finland, the importance of supporting leadership development in initial teacher education – and doing this based on research – has received increasing attention in recent years (Heikonen et al., 2023; Ministry of Education and Culture [MoEC], 2022). For example, the aim of increasing support for leadership development in teacher education is mentioned among the main objectives of measures to develop teacher education in the Teacher Education Development Programme composed by the Teacher Education Forum, set up by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC, 2022). Included in the recent attempts to improve leadership development support in teacher education (e.g., Hanhimäki et al., 2024; Heikonen et al., 2023), one class teacher education programme in a Finnish university conducted, as part of the project financed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, a specific study group design to enhance student teachers' leadership competency. The project name was removed to protect the privacy of the participants. The study group design is examined in the present thesis and referred to with the pseudonym teacher leadership study group (TL). There exists no previous research on TL.

In the recent publications and guidance on the enhancement of leadership development support in teacher education (Heikonen et al., 2023; MoEC, 2022), school and teacher leadership are approached as a multifaceted phenomenon. Concurrently, the documents highlight the educational organisations' need for competent pedagogical leadership that is shared, collective and communitybuilding in nature (Heikonen et al., 2023; MoEC, 2022; Nilivaara, 2023; Vahtivuori-Hänninen et al., 2019) – in other words, leadership that requires competency for collaborative and relational action (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Komives et al., 2013). In this thesis, student teachers' leadership development is primarily approached through the lens of collaborative leadership in a professional learning community based on the combination of the topicality and significance of the phenomenon in school leadership (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; MoEC, 2022; Woods & Roberts, 2019; Yada, 2024) and particularly what was identified from the data and context of the present study via the qualitative research process (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2013). Simultaneously, the present thesis acknowledges the other aspects of teacher leadership and the related This research approaches student teachers' development mainly based on their subjective perceptions, referring to their subjective views on and conceptions of their leadership development. The study relies on the socio-cultural theory and social constructivist approach to learning (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978), in which learning is seen to happen through social interaction and collaboration.

The aim of this thesis is to gain an understanding of student teachers' leadership development in TL. Concurrently, the thesis aims to contribute to the field of study by gaining insights into student teachers' leadership development in a rarely examined setting from this perspective—initial teacher education in the Finnish context. Through this examination, this thesis aims to support the

process of designing and developing research-based support for leadership development in teacher education (MoEC, 2022), to present initial teacher education as a potential leadership development context, and to help to change the paradigm of how student and novice teachers are seen as teacher leaders (see, e.g., Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011).

Sub-studies I and III contribute to the aim of this thesis by examining leadership development in TL from the perspectives of the student teachers' leadership development process, the related support and their achieved leadership competency. The theoretical lens applied in sub-study I was Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) leadership development for teachers model (LDT) and in sub-study III Komives et al.'s (2013) relational leadership model (RL). Sub-study II offers insights into the TL student teachers' leadership development also beyond TL in the teacher education programme and discusses teacher education as a leadership development context with a broader approach. Concurrently, the perspective of sub-study II enables gaining an understanding of the specific role of TL as leadership development support in the teacher education context. The specific research question of this thesis for examining student teachers' leadership development and the related support in TL was as follows: How did student teachers' leadership development occur in TL and, as the sub-question, how did TL occur as leadership development support in teacher education?

### 2 TEACHER LEADERSHIP

### 2.1 The evolution and current understanding of teacher leadership

Teacher leadership has been more extensively studied and conceptualised since the mid-1980s, especially in the US setting (e.g., Murphy, 2005; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Naturally, teachers led before the period of the last 40 years, too, but they were primarily recognised as leaders in their classrooms among their students and not beyond that setting (Murphy, 2005). Ways of understanding teacher leadership, as well as the increase in the general interest towards the phenomenon, have been closely connected to various reform movements in the field of education (Elmore, 1990; Holland et al., 2014), often promoting teacher professionalisation, decentralisation reform strategies and school-based management (Murphy, 2005; Silva et al., 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Silva et al. (2000) approach the evolution of teacher leadership through three waves. First, in the 1980s, teacher leadership was primarily seen as a phenomenon that was based on formal leadership roles possessed by rare individual teachers within a hierarchical organisation structure (Murphy, 2005; Rutten et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2000). Second, the understanding of teacher leadership highlighted teachers' instructional and pedagogical expertise and, still, the related roles and individual attributes (Murphy, 2005; Silva et al., 2000). Third, from the early 2000s on, teacher leadership has been perceived as teachers' collaboration and continuous learning for reculturing schools with the aim of achieving instructional improvement (Silva et al., 2000; York-Barr & Duke, 2004; see also Forster, 1997). This third wave had connections to the change in understanding the establishment and functioning of educational organisations from hierarchical to community-grounded, including the view of a school as a learning organisation and a community of practice (Alava, Kovalainen & Risku, 2024; Hord, 1997; Murphy, 2005). The third wave brought into focus a school's

professional learning community as a central context of leadership employed by every teacher (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Hord, 1997).

In summary, teacher leadership is currently broadly understood as a distributed/shared, collaborative and collective phenomenon (Harris, 2007; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Spillane et al., 2004; Yada, 2020) that is broadly employed informally—notwithstanding that formal roles might be included (Lantela et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2020)—and that takes place not only within the classroom setting (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2020) but also, particular, beyond it in a school (Murphy, 2005; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

Because the ultimate goal of teacher leadership is improved student learning, a broad portion of it can be seen as pedagogical (or instructional) leadership (Elo & Uljens, 2023; Lahtero et al., 2021; Sergiovanni, 1998; York-Barr & Duke, 2004) that takes place not in any context but in the context of education. This means that teacher leadership is field-specific in nature—its contents are related to education, teaching/pedagogy and learning. Examples of teachers directly leading student learning include teachers facilitating student collaboration for learning in their classrooms and teachers developing pedagogical methods and practices targeted at their students (see, e.g., Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Examples of teachers indirectly leading student learning include teachers supporting the professional development of their colleagues by mentoring or sharing effective pedagogical practices and teachers pondering and collectively defining the school values, vision and pedagogy (e.g., York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Since teacher leadership is a highly multifaceted phenomenon, there exists no consensus about a precise or general definition of it (Nguyen et al., 2020; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). However, there are a few definitions that are broadly agreed among the scholars (see, e.g., Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Additionally, it is worth noting that definitions of teacher leadership (Murphy, 2005; Wenner & Campbell, 2017) do not always clearly include all the aspects that have often been identified as central to leadership, such as setting a vision and strategy (Yukl, 2013), but approach teacher leadership, for example, more generally as a (shared) contribution to school improvement. Thus, teacher leadership can be perceived as having connections to aspects such as teacher agency (e.g., Juutilainen, 2023) and teacher collaboration (Bush & Grotjohann, 2020) with an orientation towards influence, change and improvement (see Holland et al., 2014; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

It is also worth noting that the leader status of a teacher has traditionally differed between the US and Finnish contexts. While in Finland teachers have been historically perceived as leaders, change agents and trusted professionals (Sahlberg et al., 2021), although their role has varied alongside the educational reforms (Risku, 2014; Sahlberg, 2010), the teacher leadership movement in the US has been rooted, among other aspects, in the attempt to improve the teacher status and the influencing and leadership opportunities of them (Elmore, 1990; Holland et al., 2014). Moreover, the quality and standards of Finnish teacher education can be perceived as exceptionally high in international comparisons

(Alava, Kola-Torvinen & Risku, 2024; Sahlberg et al., 2021), which sets an important starting point for Finnish teachers' capacity for teacher leadership.

In this thesis, I primarily approach teacher leadership as collaborative leadership (Jäppinen et al., 2016; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) employed by teachers in their schools' professional learning communities with the aim of continuous school and pedagogical improvement for student learning (Nguyen et al., 2020; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). It is worth noting that this thesis applies the collaborative leadership approach to examine teacher leadership so that the primary focus of the examination is not on the specific pedagogical or other contents and goals of teacher leadership but on the collaborative nature and employment of it, together with the related competency development. However, this thesis also includes the understanding of teachers as leaders in their classrooms among their students and through formal positions, such as a vice principal or appointed team leader.

# 2.2 Professional learning community as a context of teacher leadership

A school's professional learning community (PLC) is a significant context of employing collaborative school leadership (Jäppinen et al., 2016) in which teachers play a central role (Harris & Muijs, 2005; Lomos et al., 2011). There exists some variety about who are perceived to belong to a school's PLC (Antinluoma, 2023; Stoll & Louis, 2007). In this thesis, focusing on leading in collaboration with peers/colleagues, PLC is seen to consist of the professional staff of a school. However, it is useful to note that teachers' leadership is not limited to the PLC setting—they also employ leadership in the broader school community among students, guardians and other stakeholders in a school (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016). The origin and development of the concept of a PLC can be seen as closely connected to the development of international organisation theory from organisational learning towards learning organisations (Alava, Kovalainen & Risku, 2024; Antinluoma et al., 2018; Tsang, 1997). A PLC's special value as a means of developing a school is that it helps to prevent isolation, deficiencies in knowledge sharing and the setting in which teachers are just targets of reforms and instructions – in other words, the settings which could constraint change and in schools—and, instead, pursues enabling empowerment, commitment and an agentic stance among teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Hord, 1997; Leclerc et al., 2012). PLC pursues aggregating diverse expertise for collective innovation of a sustainable and long-lasting nature (Hargreaves, 2002; Hord, 1997; Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) note, yet not directly with these words, that schools employing the culture of a PLC is an effective way of developing (new) teacher leaders.

Although variation exists among the accurate ways of defining a PLC (Jäppinen et al., 2016; Lomos et al., 2011), scholars have a broad consensus on a

PLC's core aim and purpose, as well as about what kind of way of operating is intrinsic for an effective PLC. First, a PLC aims at and operates for continuous school development, including the professional development of the school staff, with the ultimate goal of improved student learning (Hord, 1997; Jäppinen et al., 2016). Second, a PLC does this by operating as a collective that aims for continuous shared and collective learning and development, including that of the individual members (Hord, 1997; Jäppinen et al., 2016). All of this is pursued through building an operational culture that embraces collaboration and synergy-building, together with an emphasis on reflection and an inquiry orientation (DuFour, 2004; Jäppinen et al., 2016).

Because a learning orientation lies at the core of a PLC and its actions (Hord, 2009; Jäppinen et al., 2016), it is important to understand how learning and development take place in a PLC. In a PLC, the community consisting of peer professionals forms a central resource for learning and shared action: peers learn from one another and share knowledge and skills in and through shared discussions and processes (Hord, 2009; Jäppinen et al., 2016). A central collective aim is to build a shared sense of meaning and purpose for achieving a deep understanding of what we want to achieve and how we pursue achieving it (Hord, 1997; Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022).

Hord (2009) perceives learning in a PLC as rooted in (social) constructivism and recognises making sense of experiences and information lying at the core of this kind of learning. In alignment with the views by Vygotsky (1978), Hord (2009, p. 41) states that learning 'constructively requires an environment in which learners work collegially and is situated in authentic activities and contexts'. Further, Hord (2009) describes constructivist learning in a PLC by applying the principles of the constructivist learning theory identified by Burns et al. (2002). According to these principles, learners possess unique prior experiences and beliefs that they bring to a learning situation, resulting in a multitude of perspectives being introduced to one another in and through social interaction and shared meaning-making. Here, through active reflection, learners construct knowledge individually and apply either accommodation/assimilation or rejection in the learning process, leading to the development of views (Burns et al., 2002). According to Burns et al., learning occurs in and through the combination of the learners' current and past authentic contexts, practices and experiences.

The ultimate goal of leadership employed by a school's PLC is improved student learning that is pursued in a PLC through continuous collaborative contribution for developing pedagogy, culture and operations in a school (Jäppinen et al., 2016; Lahtero et al., 2021; Sergiovanni, 1998). This collaborative leadership occurs in and through relationships among the PLC members and is situated, meaning that leadership is not based on stable roles and individual attributes and that the leader-follower relationship is constantly flowing, emerging and changing (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; Yada & Jäppinen, 2022; see also Komives et al., 2013; Uhl-Bien, 2006). The construction and ownership of leadership is collective, meaning that the community possesses it (Jäppinen &

Taajamo, 2022; Yada, 2020). Leadership contains and produces synergy, meaning 'the sum of the constituents' being 'more than its parts' (Jäppinen et al., 2016, p. 315; Surowiecki, 2004). Included in leadership of this nature, teachers act as leaders of self while leading themselves as a part of a sum (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This kind of leadership contradicts with the authoritarian and hierarchical model of leadership that highlights positional leaders' power over followers and the top-down approach to leadership (see Komives et al., 2013; Lorinkova et al., 2013), as well as with leadership that is only superficially shared, referring, for instance, to simply disseminating tasks (Gronn, 2002; Lahtero et al., 2017). When vision is built, strategies created and shared understanding constructed – in other words, when leadership is employed (see Yukl, 2013) - collaboratively, instead of a positional leadership simply giving instructions to the followers, it further engages the community members in contributing to the achievement of common goals and multiplies both the individual and collective potential in the community to be utilised in the process (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; Liyuan et al., 2024).

In this thesis, I primarily use the concept of collaborative PLC leadership to refer to leadership described above. As interchangeable concepts for collaborative leadership, I use shared and collective leadership. It is important to note that, in the previous literature, these concepts might contain differences in comparison with one another (Tian, 2016) although they are also used synonymously. The concept of relational leadership (Komives et al., 2013) is, in the context of this thesis, seen to closely connect and broadly overlap with collaborative leadership, for which reason I often refer to leadership of this nature simply as collaborative leadership. Regarding the conceptual relationship between the summary and sub-studies, collaborative PLC leadership is perceived as an umbrella term for leadership and the related competency in the theoretical lenses of sub-study I (LDT; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and sub-study III (RL; Komives et al., 2013) and, concurrently, those lenses as approaches to collaborative PLC leadership. These two lenses were chosen since they are appropriate for examining development towards collaborative, collective and isolation-preventive leadership, which is at the focus of the present study. The LDT considers, additionally, leadership development specifically towards teachers' leadership contexts.

#### 2.3 Student and novice teachers as teacher leaders

As discussed in relation to the evolution of the understanding of teacher leadership, traditional approaches to teacher leadership have emphasised teacher leadership as a (formal) role-focused phenomenon (Rutten et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2000) or highlighted the instructional position of experienced teachers in relation to less experienced ones (Muijs & Harris, 2006; Neumerski, 2013). These kinds of perspectives have been confining teacher leadership only to experienced teachers. Concurrently, student and novice teachers have not always

been recognised as teacher leaders (e.g., Ado, 2016). However, as Nolan and Palazzolo (2011) have stated, the core purpose in the phenomenon and reform strategy of teacher leadership is to empower all teachers, from novices to experts, to take action for school improvement. This basis and vision behind teacher leadership strongly argues for perceiving novice teachers as leaders alongside the more experienced ones and, thus, student teachers as potential near-future leaders. In the present thesis, I use the concept of a student teacher to refer to teachers in their pre-service phase, conducting their initial teacher education studies, and the concept of a novice teacher to refer to graduated teachers in the induction/early phase of their working careers.

In this thesis, teacher leadership is perceived as a process-focused (Rutten et al., 2022) and collaborative phenomenon. This sets the basis for perceiving every teacher — as a school PLC member — as a 'schoolwide' leader from the beginning of his/her career, in addition to novice teachers being leaders in classrooms from the beginning of their careers (Bond, 2011; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Naturally, student and novice teachers in their early career phases are also on their way towards taking a leadership stance and in the process of increasing the actualisation of their holistic leadership potential. For this reason, Rutten et al. (2022) refer to teacher leadership enacted by them as emergent teacher leadership (see also Harris & Muijs, 2005). It is important to note that student and novice teachers, concurrently, (should) possess 'real-time' potential and capacity for leadership in several ways (e.g., Bond, 2011), for example, as leaders of self, including leading their own professional development, and as contributors to collaborative and collective processes (Alho et al., 2023a, 2023b; Heikonen et al., 2017; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). However, this potential of student and novice teachers has been relatively rarely recognised in the previous literature (e.g., Ado, 2016). The perspectives mentioned above bring into focus how future teachers are prepared for leadership and how their leadership development occurs in the initial teacher education phase.

# 3 TEACHER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

### 3.1 Development of teacher leadership competency

In the present thesis, the concept of (student) teachers' leadership development refers to both the achieved improvement in teacher leadership competency and the professional development process—with the related support—towards that (Guskey, 2003; Timperley et al., 2007). In this summary, I primarily use the concept of competency with the aim of referring to student teachers' achieved leadership development as a multifaceted set of diverse aspects (Blömeke et al., 2015; Metsäpelto et al., 2022). These aspects include teacher leadership-related practical skills and expertise in practices, theoretical and other content knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, identity, and holistic personal growth – in other words, all those skills/competences, capacities and dimensions of expertise that teachers need to lead skilfully and effectively (Jackson et al., 2010; Metsäpelto et al., 2022). In the sub-studies, I apply, in addition to leadership competency, concepts such as a skill and a competence, driving from the specificities of the sub-studies, such as the applied theoretical lens with its original concepts in sub-study I. Hence, in this thesis, I use these three concepts (teacher leadership) competency, skill and competence—broadly interchangeably. However, the choice of primarily using the concept of competency in this summary draws from perceiving it as a holistic concept that both includes the narrower leadership skills/competences and enables teacher leadership competence — in other words, a teacher's ability to perform leadership successfully (see Blömeke et al., 2015; Metsäpelto et al., 2022). Additionally, in this thesis, I use interchangeably concepts such as (teacher leadership) development, competency development, skill(s) development and competence development.

It is worth noting that, in this thesis, I focus particularly on teacher leadership development towards collaborative PLC leadership through the LDT (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and RL (Komives et al., 2013) frameworks applied in the sub-studies. The examined development context is a Finnish class teacher education programme. In this thesis, teacher leadership competency and the related development process are seen to be, simultaneously, both individual and collective in nature. Hence, I do not aim to separate these two aspects distinctively beyond sub-study II.

# 3.2 Leadership development and the related challenges in teacher education

In initial teacher education, general professional development as a teacher and development as a teacher leader are closely connected and partly overlapping because initial teacher education is the phase of the multifaceted preparation of future teachers for their working lives (Alho et al., 2023a; Bond, 2011; Metsäpelto et al., 2022). Relatedly, it can be observed that the support for teacher leadership development can often be integrated in other learning content in initial teacher education (Bond, 2011; Xu & Patmor, 2012). For example, when teacher education supports student teachers' professional development in pedagogical competency, social skills and communication skills, or in competency for reflective thinking and self-evaluation (Metsäpelto et al., 2022; Silander & Välijärvi, 2013; see also Väisänen, 2005), it simultaneously supports student teachers' development in teacher leadership (Jackson et al., 2010; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lantela et al., 2024). Integration of leadership development support in the other learning content in teacher education is not, in itself, a bad thing. However, not providing support specifically or consciously for leadership development in teacher education might be connected to deficiencies or superficiality of development regarding the given support (Bond, 2011; Forster, 1997). Relatedly, teacher education curricula are often so tight that adding content to them, such as specific support for leadership development, can be challenging (Xu & Patmor, 2012). Additionally, one challenge regarding teacher education identified by scholars is the successful integration of job-embedded and real working-life connections to teacher education studies (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011; see also Grossman et al., 2009). The limited connections might also hinder student teachers' opportunities for leadership development (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Since the present thesis focuses on leadership development in the Finnish class teacher education context, I next discuss more precisely the nature, current state and challenges of leadership development and the related support in that specific context. In Finland, class teacher education is master's level education, taking approximately five years to complete, conducted through teacher education programmes in universities (Silander & Välijärvi, 2013). Student

teachers usually major in educational sciences completing, first, a bachelor's degree (180 ECTS) and, second, a master's degree (120 ECTS). Finnish class teacher education also includes other studies and elements such as pedagogical studies with teaching practices and multidisciplinary studies in subjects and cross-curricular themes taught in basic education (Silander & Välijärvi, 2013).

Finnish class teacher education pursues preparing student teachers for their future working lives (Metsäpelto et al., 2021) as experts who possess the capacity to conduct their work and professional development relatively autonomously (Sahlberg, 2010; Sahlberg et al., 2021). In addition, a collective and collaborative nature is strongly present in Finnish teachers' work, since Finnish teachers participate actively in the shared development and decision-making processes in their schools in collaboration with the principal, the other PLC members and school stakeholders (Ahtiainen et al., 2019; Stoll & Louis, 2007; Toom & Husu, 2016). Because it is typical for Finnish teachers that they lead their own work and contribute actively to the shared development processes in their schools, leadership can be perceived as an intrinsic aspect of their work and professional competency (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lantela et al., 2024; Metsäpelto et al., 2022; Sahlberg et al., 2021), although this aspect is not always consciously and conceptually recognised (Lantela et al., 2024).

However, the theme of leadership has not, thus far, been coherently included in the formal curricula of Finnish class teacher education programmes, at least as a mandatory study content (Heikonen et al., 2023). Relatedly, leadership is not often conceptualised or framed as a specific learning content and aspect of a teacher's professional development to student teachers (see Metsäpelto et al., 2021). This might result in challenges regarding student teachers' awareness about and capacity for pursuing the given development in their studies (Bond, 2011). Future teachers becoming aware of the aspect of leadership in a teacher's work and professional development is important since it can help them critically reflect on and, through that, continuously develop themselves as leaders, as well as increase their sense of their capacity to influence school development from the teacher role (see, e.g., Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021). It is worth noting that Finnish class teacher education programmes often include an opportunity for student teachers to include leadership studies in their degree as a minor or optional study area. However, these optional leadership studies are usually scheduled mainly in the later phases of class teacher education studies, possibly resulting in partly losing a study programme's early potential to support long-term leadership development (see Heikonen et al., 2023).

Another challenge or critique identified regarding Finnish class teacher education is that it approaches student teachers' competence development primarily as a phenomenon that takes place at the individual level (Yada, 2024) and, thus, does not sufficiently support student teachers in constructing their understanding of competences as also being collective in nature. An understanding of a competence as collective in nature is particularly important regarding collaborative leadership emerging within a professional collective (Yada & Jäppinen, 2022). Additionally, Finnish teacher education has received

criticism about its limited capacity for supporting future teachers in a profound change of their views of and attitudes towards matters related to a teacher's role, identity and agency (Juutilainen, 2023; Matikainen, 2022; see also Putnam & Borko, 1997). This might refer to partly ineffective processes of deeper-level critical reflection in teacher education (Brookfield, 2017; Holdo, 2023). The development of views and attitudes is an important part of leadership development, too (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lahtero et al., 2017). Furthermore, support for the development of student teachers' personal capacities and orientations in aspects such as conflict solving, collaboration or empathy—the central aspects of collaborative leadership competency (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Komives et al., 2013)—has been estimated as insufficient in teacher education (Blomberg, 2008; Metsäpelto et al., 2021). There are also arguments for the following: the practical orientation in Finnish teacher education has weakened during recent decades (Säntti et al., 2018).

Moreover, when looking at the working contexts and possessed capacities of in-service teachers and other school leaders, the development needs regarding teachers' understandings of and attitudes towards collaborative leadership can be identified—although the culture of collaboration can be seen as strong in Finnish educational organisations (Toom & Husu, 2016; Yada, 2020). Lahtero et al. (2017) found in their study that distributed leadership is still perceived and understood in schools primarily as the delegation of tasks, not as interaction among the members of a school community. There are also examples of Finnish schools including culturally unrelated teacher groups drawing, for example, on the contrasting views and experience of teachers of various subjects or teachers of various levels of education (Lahtero & Risku, 2014; Tirri et al., 2021), which, while being understandable, may hinder school-level collaboration. Additionally, there might exist some further development needs regarding teachers' attitudes towards the promotion of the kind of collaborative leadership and action in which less experienced teachers' views and contributions are specifically encouraged by the more experienced ones (Blomberg, 2008; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011). Furthermore, in some international comparisons, Finnish teachers seem to employ relatively low levels of collaboration (Yada, 2024). Finally, recently diversified educational contexts in Finland require educational professionals to have specific expertise in promoting inclusive approach in school leadership (Jantunen et al., 2022; Roberson & Perry, 2022). These observations connect to teacher education by pointing out the development needs of teachers regarding collaboration-related attitudes and understanding. In summary, it can be noted that there currently exists a need for further enhancing leadership development support in Finnish teacher education.

# 3.3 TL as a pre-professional learning community

In the present thesis, I perceive TL as functioning as a 'pre'-PLC (Alho et al., 2023b; see also Hord, 2009; Jäppinen et al., 2016) as the core of the leadership

development support offered by it to student teachers (referred to also as *students*). When perceiving TL as a pre-PLC, I approach it by applying as a lens to learning and development, first, PLC and, second, the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In TL, leadership development takes place through the kind of peer collaboration among the students that is typical for a PLC and through the students immersing themselves in the collaborative and relational leadership culture of TL (Hord, 2009; Jäppinen et al., 2016). Learning and development that relies largely on peers and community as resources broadly imitates and models professional learning and development in a jobembedded PLC. Relatedly, TL itself is broadly modelled on a job-embedded PLC regarding the aspects of (leadership) action, culture and community and, here, aims to provide the students with personal experiences and perceptions of what it is to be part of a community of this nature and its leadership.

Applying the community of practice as a lens to learning helps to further understand the nature of development in TL. Lave and Wenger (1991) used the concept of a community of practice to describe a community and process in which the community members continuously deepen their expertise and develop their practices further on both the personal and collective levels based on learning that is situated and social in nature (see also Argote et al., 2021; Wenger et al., 2002). In this learning process, novices learn through getting involved/socialised into and through gaining personal experience of the authentic practices, actions and culture of an (expert) community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Here, novices also observe the actions by the experts (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991). These ways of learning and development are employed in TL. However, it is worth noting that, in this thesis, TL is not perceived as the traditional community of practice setting in the sense of seeing the experts being at the centre and novices moving towards the centre from the periphery (cf. Lave & Wenger, 1991). On the contrary, learning in TL is heavily based on peer contribution, student teachers' (i.e., 'novices') views and prior experiences playing a valuable role, and teacher educators (i.e., 'experts') taking the role of facilitating and supporting the students' learning processes, not performing as 'experts'. However, this does not exclude the fact that the teacher educators facilitating TL can be seen to, concurrently, represent the experts of teacher leadership for the students (see Lunenberg et al., 2007).

When framing the TL study group as a pre-PLC, I understand it as a community that has similar features and ways of functioning compared to a PLC, but that occurs within a pre-working-life context of teachers—teacher education—in contrast to the in-service setting. The central difference between a pre-PLC and a job-embedded school PLC is the following: the ultimate goal of a pre-PLC is not to improve the school and continuously develop itself for this purpose but to support student teachers' professional (leadership) development on the individual level to prepare them for their future working lives. In this kind of setting, the collective is, in the end, an instrument for achieving the ultimate (individual) development goals, even though the development of the collective would be included as an intermediate goal in the process. As an additional

perspective to TL as a pre-PLC, it should be noted that, in TL, student teachers pursue practising and constructing the kind of competency for collaborative and relational action that they can apply in their future PLCs as a tool for effectively promoting and engaging in the central processes of a PLC, such as building a shared vision and understanding (Hord, 2009). Finally, it is worth noting that perceiving TL as functioning as a pre-PLC does not exclude TL from also including other forms of support for leadership development.

### 4 THE AIM OF THIS THESIS

The general aim of this thesis was to gain insights into leadership development in initial teacher education. This aim was more specifically approached by exploring student teachers' leadership development in a specific class teacher education-integrated design, TL, and the role of this design as a leadership development support in teacher education. The research question was as follows:

How did student teachers' leadership development occur in TL and, as the sub-question, how did TL occur as leadership development support in teacher education? (Sub-studies I, II and III)

The sub-studies addressed the main research question as follows: sub-studies I and III examined leadership development in TL, and sub-study II included, as part of the broader perspective, student reports on leadership development in TL. The sub-studies addressed the sub-question as follows: sub-study II focused on TL student teachers' leadership development in the broader teacher education programme, while sub-studies I and III focused specifically on leadership development in TL. Here, these three sub-studies together provided insights into the specific role of TL as a form of leadership development support in teacher education.

### 5 METHODOLOGY

### 5.1 Philosophical and methodological underpinnings

This thesis relies on the socio-cultural theory (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978) and the social constructivist paradigm (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) regarding the examined phenomenon, leadership development in TL. According to the social constructivist paradigm, reality is socially negotiated and knowledge socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015). Development of an individual occurs in and is influenced by the surrounding social, cultural and historical context in which the individual subject plays an active role in constructing knowledge through an interactive process with his/her social environment (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burns et al., 2002; see also Vygotsky, 1978). According to the socio-cultural and social constructivist approach, it is seen, in the present thesis, that student teachers' leadership development did not take place in a vacuum but through continuous and multifaceted social interaction and collaboration with the TL community. Naturally, TL existed within the surrounding teacher education programme connected to the broader society, culture and academia in several ways, and the student teachers joined TL with their unique socially and culturally constructed prior perceptions and experiences.

In TL, student teachers constructed their perceptions, views and meanings as well as developed their actions, practices and competencies of leadership in and through the multifaceted and continuous interactions and relationships among the community members (Burns et al., 2002). This took place through shared conceptual discussions on phenomena such as teaching and leadership but also through the daily authentic interactive processes that aimed at taking collective action and leading as a group. In these processes of shared action and leadership, student teachers continuously tuned and developed their ways of doing in accordance with what was pursued and employed by the community

and by making perceptions of how the group functions and how they as individual group members act as part of these processes. In the leadership development process that took place in TL, knowledge of and competency in leadership were simultaneously constructed on the individual and collective levels: the group's processes aimed at building collective understanding of and action in leadership, and the individual members actively utilised these collective processes in developing their personal understandings of and actions in leadership (see Burns et al., 2002; Vygotsky, 1978).

Rooted in the kind of socio-cultural approach that emphasises an individual as a subject (versus an object) and as an active agent, the TL student teachers' leadership development in their studies can be perceived, additionally, through the subject-centred socio-cultural approach (SCSC; Eteläpelto et al., 2014; see also Eteläpelto et al., 2015) as a lens to professional development. The central idea in the SCSC is that a subject actively guides his/her professional development process within a specific context—TL and the related teacher education programme—that both enables and constrains the individual development process of the subject (Eteläpelto et al., 2014). Here, however, it is worth noting that the central concepts in the SCSC, agency and identity (Eteläpelto et al., 2014), are not included in the main concepts or approaches of this thesis.

This research approaches the student teachers' leadership development primarily through their related perceptions. Here, the concept of perception refers to student teachers' subjective views on and conceptions of their leadership development. In this study, students' leadership development is seen to include aspects such as the students' subjective understandings of their achieved leadership competency (such as a perception of having become a better listener), of the relationships between the achieved competency and employed action in TL (such as a perception of shared discussions having supported the development of listening skills), and of individual leadership development goals. These kinds of aspects are challenging to measure externally with methods such as observation (Patton, 2015). Hence, the students' leadership development was chosen to be examined primarily through their related perceptions. It is also important to gain an understanding of how the new TL design is conveyed to its target group, which may have connections, for example, to the student teachers' motivation and commitment (Meece et al., 2006; Wigfield et al., 2016) in their leadership development processes. Here, too, student teachers' personal perceptions offer valuable insights.

In qualitative research, the role of a researcher is central because he/she is the instrument in the inquiry (Patton, 2015) and the one who continuously makes interpretations in the process (Burr, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This covers the research process from the planning phase through data collection and analysis to writing the research report (Tracy, 2010). Hence, qualitative inquiry is always dependent on the researcher to a certain extent. In the present study, additionally, it is seen that the production of the (interview) data and creation of an understanding of the examined phenomenon, leadership development in TL, are interactive and co-constructed processes between the participants and the

researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For example, during a qualitative interview, participants continuously made interpretations of the interviewer/researcher's questions and the interviewer/researcher of the participants' answers. The corresponding interactive process continues in the analysis phase in which the researcher—with his/her prior socially and culturally constructed perceptions—and the co-produced data continuously interact with each other (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2013). In this way, this thesis's understanding of knowledge construction also regarding the research process has connections to social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015).

In sub-study I, TL is referred to as 'TL study group intervention'. I made this conceptual choice in sub-study I with the aim of emphasising the TL study group as a new design that aimed to meet the need for change regarding the currently existing state of leadership development support in initial teacher education (see Heikonen et al., 2023; MoEC, 2022). It is worth noting that although, in sub-study I, I refer to TL with the concept of the TL study group intervention, this does not refer to the traditional interventional study design including, for example, experimental and control groups, or action research design (e.g., Sannino, 2023). The TL study group was designed and implemented independently from the present study.

### 5.2 Context and participants

The context of the present study was a Finnish class teacher education programme with the TL design. A special feature of the given teacher education programme is that student teachers study in so-called study groups, particularly during the first year of their studies. Beginning student teachers are divided into these study groups at the beginning of their studies based on the motivation and interest they express in the motivation letters they write in the application process to the study groups. In the study groups, comprising approximately 15 students on average, students focus on the core studies in educational sciences (25 ECTS). The idea behind the study groups is that every study group approaches this common content via its specific lens or phenomenon, for example, special education or multilingual pedagogy. These specific lenses of the study groups aim to ensure that student teachers have, from the beginning of their studies, an opportunity to actively focus on the kind of theme or area of a teacher's professional development that they are personally interested in, without that choice narrowing their opportunities for general and holistic development as a teacher in their studies. TL with the aim of enhancing teachers' leadership competency was one of these study groups. It was held for the first time during the academic year 2019-2020. It responded to the need to include leadership development support in Finnish teacher education (MoEC, 2022) and to serve as a solution for starting that support from the early phase of teacher education studies.

Since every study group emphasises its specific educational phenomenon or theme as the focus of learning, studying in these study groups can be seen to contain connections to the phenomenon-based approach to learning (Tarnanen & Kostiainen, 2020). Additionally, studying in the study groups is grounded in the socio-cultural and social constructivist approach to learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Specifically, studying in a study group is constructed around a given phenomenon so that this phenomenon is explored in the process, which emphasises collaboration and shared reflection. Here, the social context and peer community of a study group play a central role in supporting active individual learning (Burns et al., 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). In this process, student teachers decide together with teacher educators about the specific ways of studying and approaching the phenomenon in focus. Teacher educators' role in this process is more about facilitating learning than, for example, lecturing. The TL study group had joint meetings approximately once every two weeks during the first year of the students' studies. These meetings were included in the students' broader teacher education studies. Additionally, the students conducted TL-related activities, such as working in small groups for accomplishing assignments, also outside of the joint meetings.

The present research was conducted as part of the broader DAWN research and development project (2018–2022) with the aim of examining the current state of and need for leadership and its development in the field of education in Finland. The participants of the present research consist of 15 TL student teachers and 3 TL teacher educators (referred to also as *facilitators*). The participants were native Finns by national and cultural backgrounds. The division of the participants between the sub-studies is discussed further in the next section.

# 5.3 Data collection and analysis

Detailed information about the sub-studies, such as the division of data between them as well as their specific research questions and analysis methods, is summarised in Table 1 at the end of this chapter. Because the present study aimed to gain insights into how leadership development in TL and the related teacher education programme was perceived by the participants, a semi-structured interview format with open-ended questions was chosen as the primary data collection method (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2013). The qualitative interview method has been stated to be an effective way of collecting data on participants' perceptions, views and experiences (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2013). All the research interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview data were supplemented with written documents (motivation letters).

The data for this study consist of 1) the focus group interviews of TL student teachers (n = 15) in May 2020, 2) the focus group interviews of TL facilitators (n = 3) in June 2020, 3) the individual interviews of 5 TL student teachers in September 2021 and 4) the same 5 TL student teachers' motivation letters written in the application process to study groups in September 2019. The data collection

was scheduled in relation to the students' teacher education studies so that they wrote the motivation letters at the beginning of their studies, participated in the focus group interviews at the end of their first year of studying and took part in the individual interviews at the beginning of their third year of studying. The data were divided between the sub-studies so that sub-study I utilised data 1 (student teachers' focus group interviews), sub-study II utilised data 3 (student teachers' individual interviews) and 4 (student teachers' motivation letters), and sub-study III utilised data 1 (student teachers' focus group interviews) and 2 (facilitators' focus group interviews). The reason for scheduling data collection in the early phase of the students' studies was that the aim was to collect timely data on TL and to come to better understand students' (views on their) leadership development during their studies versus, for example, only in the graduation phase. Examining students' timely perceptions instead of, for instance, retrospective reflections can provide valuable understanding of how to support their leadership development in the early/specific phase of their studies.

The students participated in the focus group interviews in four groups, each group consisting of 3-4 members. All three TL facilitators participated in the same focus group interview of facilitators. The focus group interview schedule applied in the students' and facilitators' interviews included 14 open-ended questions. The questions addressed corresponding themes but also varied according to the target group. The main themes in the interview schedules consisted of 1) the participants' general descriptions of the TL study group, 2) their expectations for the study group work and perceptions of the realisation of these expectations, 3) practical ways of working in the study group, 4) learning and development in the study group (from the perspective of the learning objectives and the achieved student development in the facilitators' interview, and of the achieved development in the students' interviews), and 5) visions and wishes for developing the study group in the future.

The five students' individual interviews included six open-ended questions. The central themes in these individual interviews were the students' perceptions of their leadership development during the first two years of their studies, their plans for gaining leadership development during the rest of their studies, and their goals and thoughts regarding themselves as future teacher leaders. In the motivation letters, the students focused on arguing for and describing their motivation and potential to study in the TL study group.

At the time of the focus group interviews, the establishment of the specific perspectives and approaches of sub-studies was still in process. Typically for qualitative research, these perspectives, approaches and specific research questions were developed into their finalised form as the research process continued (Agee, 2009) and the focus group interview data were then approached with the lens of the specified perspectives and research questions in the later phases of the analysis process.

In the present study, focus group interviews mean interviews that were conducted in small groups and in which participation was purposefully limited to the TL members (Patton, 2015). The aim of these interviews was to gain an

understanding of the participants' perceptions of the examined phenomenon, leadership development in TL (Marková et al., 2007; Patton, 2015). The focus group interview method was chosen as the data collection method in sub-studies I and III because it enables gathering richer data, in comparison to individual interviews, through creating an interactive space and encouraging shared discussion among the participants (Patton, 2015). Additionally, it is a specifically suitable data collection method in a setting where participants have a shared experience of the examined phenomenon (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004; Patton, 2015), such as TL. At the time of the students' focus group interviews, the researcher and students were not familiar with each other and a research interview situation was assumed to be new to many of the participants. Thus, the creation of a casual atmosphere in the interviews was considered important to enable the collection of richer data, which was another reason for choosing the focus group interview method (Patton, 2015). Individual interviews were chosen as the data collection method in sub-study II with the specific aim of examining the participants' individual leadership development in teacher education.

In sub-studies I and II, the applied analysis method was qualitative problem-driven content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). The starting point of the problem-driven content analysis is the epistemic questions, in other words, the questions with the aim of gaining knowledge and understanding about 'phenomena ... that the analysts believe texts [or interview data] are able to answer' (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 355). This means that the starting point for the analysis is most of all setting the problem—in other words, the specific research question(s) for which the researcher starts to search for answers through pursuing suitable analytical paths in approaching the data (Krippendorff, 2013).

In sub-study I, I used problem-driven qualitative content analysis with both deductive (theory-driven) and inductive (data-driven) reasoning (Krippendorff, 2013; see also Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) depending on the approach of each research question. In the study, student teachers' leadership skills development was approached with both deductive reasoning as a means of identifying their leadership development in the light of a theoretical lens to teacher leadership and inductive reasoning as a means of gaining an understanding of what aspects the student teachers themselves identify as leadership skills development.

The theoretical lens applied in deductive reasoning in sub-study I was the LDT (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2009), including four skill areas of teacher leadership and the related skills development: personal assessment, changing schools, influencing strategies and planning for action. These skill areas relate to leading and understanding self, colleagues and the school organisation (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). LDT primarily approaches the aspect of understanding the school organisation from the perspective of a teacher's own working context (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). It is worth noting that the aspect of understanding the school organisation was applied, in this study, from the perspective of the student teachers' more general development in understanding a school organisation. This was because they were not yet involved in their own working contexts, in contrast to in-service teachers. Additionally, it should be

noted that, originally, the LDT approaches teacher leadership not only as a collaborative phenomenon.

In sub-study II, I used as the analysis method problem-driven qualitative content analysis with inductive reasoning (Krippendorff, 2013; see also Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), supplemented with typologisation (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2013). In sub-study III, the starting point for the analysis emphasised a comprehensive exploration of how leadership according to a certain theoretical lens, RL (Komives et al., 2013), was employed in TL by the students and facilitators. Thus, the analysis regarding the first research question in sub-study III was identified as theory-driven content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Patton, 2015). RL (Komives et al., 2013) included five components of relational leadership: 1) purposefulness, 2) inclusivity, 3) empowerment, 4) ethicality and 5) process-centredness. The analysis of the second research question was data-driven (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Patton, 2015), building on the theory-driven analysis in the first research question.

### 5.4 Trustworthiness and ethics

In the present study, regarding both trustworthiness and ethics, the University of Jyväskylä guidelines for responsible science and research ethics (JYU, 2024), the instructions by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2012), and EU General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation 679/2016) were followed. Consideration of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2010) concerns several aspects in a qualitative study both during the conduct of the study and in reporting. The conduct of a study includes several phases from the design phase through data collection and analysis to reporting (e.g., Patton, 2015). In this process, I continuously strove to maintain carefulness and make justified decisions. I designed the data collection so that it would enable gaining sufficiently rich data for qualitative research (Patton, 2015). In the data collection phase, I worked to ensure consistency between the interview groups regarding the discussion on the central interview themes and checking with the participants if I felt unsure about whether I had understood correctly what they meant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). In the analysis phase, I chose the kind of analytical approaches that best enabled answering the research questions (Krippendorff, 2013; Patton, 2015). I also returned several times to the raw data to keep the findings grounded in the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Patton, 2015). By using theory triangulation and both theory-driven and data-driven approaches, I increased the number of lenses applied in this study, which may help to decrease the risk of possible bias resulting from the application of only one lens (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). Researcher (or investigator) triangulation (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was applied in this study so that I asked the co-researchers to confirm/challenge the findings I had identified by sharing with them the related pseudonymised raw data extracts.

Through the research process, I continually critically reflected on the choices and interpretations I made as the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). This is particularly important in qualitative research, including qualitative (problem-driven) content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorff, 2013) in which the researcher is the instrument (Patton, 2015). For example, I wrote down my choices and interpretations and the reasons behind them. If, later in the process, I found that there was a more justified approach regarding, for example, the interpretation of the data or the conduct of the analysis, I gave up my previous approach. In addition, I critically reflected on my subjective (socially and culturally constructed) assumptions and perceptions, as well as my possible prior expectations or wishes for the results regarding the examined phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). The fact that I as the researcher did not know the student teachers beforehand and that I did not have personal previous experience of study group work decreased the risk of possible bias caused by the researcher's position or prior expectations. On the other hand, I pursued familiarising myself with the concept and context of TL (Tracy, 2013) by including into the research interview schedules questions that enabled me to increase my understanding of the nature of TL, its way of functioning and studying there, and by attending a couple of TL meetings after conducting the interviews.

In the reporting phase, I sought to make transparent to the reader the choices and interpretations I had made in the research process (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2013). I did this by carefully describing the conduct of the analysis and by including in the reports pseudonymised data extracts to enable the reader to draw conclusions and evaluate the interpretations and findings identified by the researcher (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2013). For transferability, I endeavoured to discuss the context of the study in a sufficiently open and detailed manner, to enable the reader to evaluate the context and circumstances of the study and, thus, the degree of transferability of the present research procedure and results to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010). In qualitative research, it is highly important that the researcher continually considers the context of the study—as I aimed to do—because understanding the context plays a central role in avoiding biased interpretations of meanings regarding participants' actions and reports (Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2010).

Focus group interviews—the method applied broadly in the data collection of the present study—include a possibility that participants influence each other's answers and that single participants' opportunities and time for answering are limited (Patton, 2015). These risks were decreased in the present study so that the student teachers were interviewed in the same groups in which they had conducted small group working for a longer period before the research interviews. I knew, via the TL facilitators, that there was an open, respectful and dialogical atmosphere in these small groups, which increases the participants' opportunities and confidence to share their genuine opinions and thoughts. At the beginning of the focus group interviews, I also encouraged the participants to share their personal perceptions openly. In addition, I strove to provide every

participant with a genuine opportunity for sharing his/her personal views by limiting the number of participants in one interview group to a maximum of four and by asking after every interview question and at the end of the interview whether any participant wanted to add anything.

The matters related to trustworthiness discussed above also relate to ethics in the research process since they multifacetedly concern research integrity and credibility (see Tracy, 2010). From the perspective of ethics, the following principles should be considered in a research process: informed consent, avoidance of deception, privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy (Christians, 2000; see also Miles et al., 2014; Tracy, 2010). In accordance with these principles, TL student teachers were informed about the purpose and goals of the DAWN research, voluntariness of participation, as well as their right to withdraw their participation at any point of the research process, after which they voluntarily wrote informed written consent for their participation in the DAWN research at the beginning of their teacher education studies (September-October 2019). In spring 2020, I contacted the TL student teachers with the assistance of the TL facilitators, introduced the present research to them in a briefing and via email, and asked about their willingness to participate in this specific research within the broader DAWN research programme. Before conducting the student teachers' focus groups and individual interviews, I asked them and they gave their oral consent to participate in the present study, including the recorded interviews. In addition, the TL facilitators gave their informed written consent to participate in the DAWN research and oral consent to participate in the present study within the DAWN research before they were interviewed in June 2020.

The aspects of privacy and confidentiality (Christians, 2000) were considered in the research process by pseudonymising the data in order to remove the participants' personal data. All the research data, the document connecting the pseudonyms and original data, and contact information of the participants in every phase of the study were stored and handled according to the JYU guidelines (2024) to protect the privacy of the participants. The aspect of accuracy (Christians, 2000; see also Tracy, 2010) was considered in the present study in several ways. In the design and data collection phase, in addition to what was discussed above concerning trustworthiness, I, for example, designed and presented the interview questions so that they only helped the participants to focus their answers on certain themes but did not direct their answers beyond that (Patton, 2015). The transcription process was conducted carefully to maintain the accuracy of the data, and the reporting, as described previously in relation to trustworthiness, aimed to enable the evaluation of the study and findings via careful descriptions of them.

**Table 1**Overview of the sub-studies

	Sub-study I	Sub-study II	Sub-study III
Title	Finnish student teachers' perceptions of their leadership development in a study group intervention to enhance their teacher leadership.	Student teachers' leadership development in a Finnish class teacher education programme.	Employing relational leadership in teacher education to enhance student teachers' leadership competency.
Aim	To examine the student teachers' perceptions of their leadership skills development and its support in TL.	To examine the student teachers' leadership development in the broader context of TL, the teacher education programme.	To explore how relational leadership was employed in TL and what kinds of perceptions the student teachers had of relational leadership.
Research questions	1) What kinds of perceptions did the student teachers have of their LDT skills development in the TL study group?  2) What kinds of perceptions did the student teachers have of the role of collaboration in supporting their LDT skills development in the TL study group?  3) Which aspects of their LDT skills development did the student teachers themselves perceive as contributing to their leadership skills development?	1) What kinds of approaches did the student teachers employ in their leadership development? 2) How did the student teachers pursue achieving leadership development during teacher education? 3) What are the reflections of the student teachers regarding their achieved leadership development and the related supportive and preventive factors?	1) How is relational leadership employed in TL? 2) What kinds of perceptions do the students have of the advantages and challenges of relational leadership?
Participants and data	Four semi-structured focus group interviews of 15 student teachers in total.	Motivation letters and semi-structured individual interviews of five student teachers.	Four semi-structured focus group interviews of 15 student teachers in total and one semi-structured focus group interview of 3 facilitators.
Analysis	Qualitative problem-driven content analysis with deductive and inductive reasoning.	Qualitative problem-driven content analysis with inductive reasoning and typologisation.	Deductive and inductive qualitative content analysis.

#### 6 OVERVIEW OF THE ORIGINAL STUDIES

# 6.1 Sub-study I: Finnish student teachers' perceptions of their leadership development in a study group intervention to enhance their teacher leadership

Sub-study I examined the TL student teachers' perceptions of their leadership skills development and its support in TL. The results indicated that the TL students achieved leadership skills development in TL in several skill areas of Katzenmeyer & Moller's (2009) LDT model, particularly in personal assessment referring to understanding and leading oneself and influencing strategies referring to understanding and leading (together with) colleagues. The achieved development in the LDT skill areas of changing schools and planning for action —that is, the understanding of and leading on the level of the school organisation—was scarcer.

According to the student teachers, collaboration played a central role in supporting their LDT skills development in the TL study group since it offered a space and opportunity for developing the LDT skills in practice. However, the findings based on the inductive and deductive analysis of the student teachers' achieved leadership skills development differed from each other: the direct reports by the students included perceptions of rather limitedly achieved leadership skills development in TL, whereas the deductive analyses on the students' perceptions of their skills development revealed achieved leadership skills development in several LDT skill areas.

In sub-study I, a group-based TL design emphasising leadership development through peer collaboration appeared as a potential and effective way to support student teachers' leadership competence development towards collaborative leadership in their future PLCs. However, to further improve student teachers' competence in leadership for their future school organisations, additional support—that would probably enable broader connections to

authentic and job-embedded school environments and PLCs—would be needed to enhance student teachers' development in coming to better know and understand a school organisation as a leadership context. Here, on the other hand, it is worth pondering what is the aim, purpose and, thus, the sufficient level of leadership development in the initial teacher education phase.

According to sub-study I, student teachers' primary perceptions revealed that they perceived their leadership development in TL, particularly in the aspect of practical leadership competence, to be rather limited, although deductive analysis of their perceptions indicated multifaceted LDT skills development through collaboration. Thus, sub-study I implies that the student teachers did not fully recognise their achieved skills development in TL as leadership skills development. This was probably related to leadership development occurring in TL through the kind of action and exercises that were not directly framed and conceptualised as leadership exercises. This implies that student teachers would benefit from additional support for more comprehensive recognition of their leadership development in TL-type development settings. It would also be worth considering whether framed practical leadership exercises should be added to teacher education to a greater extent as a means of further supporting student teachers' practical leadership development.

Sub-study I contributes to the previous literature in the field by examining leadership development in initial teacher education, identifying initial teacher education as a potential leadership development context and discussing the application of the pre-PLC type of leadership development support in it.

## 6.2 Sub-study II: Student teachers' leadership development in a Finnish class teacher education programme

Sub-study II examined the TL student teachers' leadership development in the broader context of TL, the teacher education programme, and aimed at gaining insights into the TL students' leadership development in their studies from a more holistic perspective, reaching also beyond TL. Sub-study II discussed, based on the students' subjective perceptions, the five student teachers' individual leadership development approaches, their ways of utilising the teacher education programme in their leadership development process, and the factors that supported or prevented leadership development in teacher education.

According to sub-study II, student teachers' leadership development in their studies was individual in nature. The students represented diverse approaches to their leadership development, including competence-driven (n = 2), personality-driven (n = 2) and context-driven (n = 1) approaches. These approaches included the student teachers' personal leadership development goals and how they utilised the teacher education programme as support for their development towards those goals. The results indicated that TL students utilised the teacher education programme, including its diverse elements, as

support for their leadership development rather actively and multifacetedly. They recognised leadership as a central aspect of a teacher's professional competency, were conscious about the related development in their studies and identified themselves as potential teacher leaders. Students with the competence-driven approach estimated their achieved leadership development as relatively weaker in their studies and TL having supported their leadership development relatively less compared to students with the other approaches.

The findings imply that TL—in which the student teachers studied during the first year of their teacher education studies and that dealt with leadership as an important aspect of a teacher's professional development—increased the TL students' capacity to further their leadership development in the later phases of their teacher education studies. Here, TL functioned as a kind of a catalyst for student teachers' leadership development processes. This emphasises the value of including early leadership development support in teacher education in the future.

Sub-study II implied that no specific or coordinated support existed in teacher education for the students' leadership development processes after TL, since the students reported nothing about the existence of that kind of support and seemed to progress their leadership development in their studies rather independently. Although TL student teachers seemed to do this relatively successfully, integrating more continuous and coordinated support for students' leadership development into teacher education would be worth considering for the future. This could enable even more multifaceted leadership development in the pre-service phase.

Sub-study II contributes to the theoretical and empirical literature in the field by identifying initial class teacher education as a potential leadership development context. The study also discussed the related supporting and preventing factors, which can help to develop teacher education as a more effective leadership development setting. Additionally, the study recognised the individual nature of leadership development as early as in the initial teacher education phase, not only in the in-service phase, which should be considered when designing and tailoring leadership development support for student teachers. Sub-study II revealed, in alignment with sub-study I, that students perceived their practical leadership development and the related support as rather limited in their studies. Thus, it would be worth considering whether the amount of practical leadership exercises should be increased in teacher education.

### 6.3 Sub-study III: Employing relational leadership in teacher education to enhance student teachers' leadership competency

The aim of sub-study III was to explore how relational leadership—according to Komives et al.'s (2013) RL—was employed in TL to enhance student teachers' leadership competency, and the student teachers' perceptions of the advantages

and challenges related to relational leadership. Sub-study III indicated that relational leadership was employed in TL by both the facilitators and students. All the five components of RL were identified in TL leadership. The students' perceptions of relational leadership included observations of its benefits regarding, in particular, diversity increasing the potential of a group and taking action as a group as an effective way of working. The challenges related to relational leadership reported by the students included collaborative decision-making and goal-setting—instead of positional leaders (i.e., TL facilitators) making the decisions and setting the goals—having been connected to some confusion about the groups' specific goals, as well as about the connection between the employed action in TL and the achievement of those goals.

The results indicated that the students adopted relational leadership as part of their own action and beliefs through employing relational leadership themselves and observing the leadership action modelled by the facilitators and peers. Their perceptions of the advantages of relational leadership concerned both the advantages of relational leadership action itself and the advantages related to how the involvement in relational leadership had enhanced their competency development on a personal level. Thus, sub-study III implies that employing relational leadership in TL supported student teachers in developing their relational leadership competency regarding their related practical competences and positive attitudes. The study did not specifically reveal how conscious the student teachers were about their development in relational leadership competency.

Sub-study III contributes to the previous literature in the field by exploring how leadership development can be supported through the authentic and daily leadership action and culture applied in a study community within initial teacher education. In sub-study III, student teachers were identified as active co-leaders with their facilitators, which is a significant finding supplementing the previous research from the perspective of student teachers as not only potential future leaders but also as real-time leaders in their studies. Teacher educators, again, were identified as not only modellers and educators of teaching but also as modellers and educators of leadership to student teachers. This requires them to possess a holistic understanding of the given aspect of their role, which is why their professional development should be supported accordingly in the future.

According to sub-study III, TL appeared as a potential design to be integrated into initial teacher education for developing the kind of leadership competency that is topically needed in educational organisations: leadership promoting inclusivity and, through its empowering and relationship-oriented nature, sustainability and well-being in a school community. However, it should be considered that the transference of an acquired competency from one context (TL) to another (future school organisation) is a complex process and that the study did not reveal how the students' leadership competency developed towards more diverse settings in comparison to TL.

#### 7 GENERAL DISCUSSION

#### 7.1 Student teachers' leadership development in and through TL

#### 7.1.1 Summary of the main findings

The occurrence of student teachers' leadership development in TL contains both their achieved leadership competency and the process and nature of their leadership development with the related support. As the main findings regarding the achieved leadership competency in TL, student teachers developed their personal understandings of the phenomenon of leadership and themselves as leaders (i.e., development on the intra-level) together with their competencies in leading in collaboration with others (i.e., development on the inter-level). The main findings on the leadership development process and support in TL were that the student teachers developed their leadership competencies, particularly, through employing collaborative leadership in practice with their peers and facilitators and through participating in shared peer discussions that encouraged reflection on the leadership theme on both collective and individual levels. According to the main findings, the following leadership development support was not particularly effective in TL: support for student teachers becoming aware of the nature of collaborative leadership and the related competency development process, and support for leadership development that is directly related to teachers' work contexts.

Table 2 comprises the main findings of the sub-studies, leading to the findings of the main research question in the summary. In Table 2, the findings on both the achieved leadership competency, together with its limitations, and the leadership development support, together with its limitations, are based on the TL members' perceptions.

Table 2Main findings on leadership development in TL

	Sub-study I	Sub-study II	Sub-study III	Summary
Achieved	Deepened understanding of self	Strengthened personal	Competency for employing in	Development of student teachers'
leadership	(e.g., one's own views, strengths/	understandings of the	practice collaborative/	personal understandings of the
competency	development needs and values as a	phenomenon of	relational leadership	phenomenon of leadership and
	person, teacher and leader)	leadership and oneself	1	themselves as leaders (i.e.,
	,	as a leader concerning,	Gaining positive perceptions of	development on the intra-level)
	Development of thinking towards	among other aspects,	collaborative/relational	,
	perceiving the diversity of views,	what 'good' leadership	leadership (i.e., pre-attitude	Development of student teachers'
	persons and roles as a strength in a	is and the personal	development) concerning,	competencies in leading in
	community and as the resource	way of employing it	particularly, diversity as a	collaboration with others (i.e.,
	provided by the community		strength in a group and working	development on the inter-level)
			as a group being an effective	,
	Strengthened practical skills for		way of taking action	
	interactive and collaborative action		, 0	
Limitations of	Practical leadership competency	Practical leadership	Awareness of gaining	Awareness of the nature of
achieved		competency	competency in collaborative/	collaborative leadership
leadership	Understanding a school		relational leadership	•
competency	organisation		1	Leadership competency
				development directly related to
				teachers' work contexts
Leadership	Students' involvement in shared	Shared peer	Personal involvement in	Student teachers' employing
development	discussions and authentic	discussions on	employing collaborative/	collaborative leadership in practice
support	collaborative processes with peers	leadership	relational leadership in practice	with their peers and facilitators
		encouraging the		•
		related reflection on	Observing facilitators and peers	Student teachers participating in
		the personal level	employing collaborative/	shared peer discussions that
		1	relational leadership in practice	encouraged reflection on leadership
				themes, both collectively and at the
				individual level

	Sub-study I	Sub-study II	Sub-study III	Summary
Limitations of	Practical leadership exercise	Practical leadership	Support for developing the	Awareness of the nature of the
leadership	including, for example, leading	exercise (versus, e.g.,	awareness of collaborative/	collaborative leadership
development	peers and/or children	theoretical and/or	relational leadership and the	development process
support		reflective approaches	related competency	
	Job-embedded/work contexts-	to leadership theme)	achievement	Leadership competency
	related leadership exercise			development directly related to
	_			teachers' work contexts

The main findings on TL as leadership development support in teacher education included TL increasing the student teachers' awareness of the leadership aspect in a teacher's work and professional development (Ado, 2016; Bond, 2011) and TL supporting their practical competency development in leading in collaboration with peers (Jäppinen et al., 2016; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The study addressed as further development needs in TL and teacher education the increase of support for strengthening student teachers' awareness of and critical reflection on how (collaborative) leadership development takes place and is achieved in teacher education and the increase of support for leadership development that is more directly connected to teachers' work contexts (see Ball & Forzani, 2009). The main findings of the sub-question on the occurrence of TL as leadership development support in teacher education are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3**TL as leadership development support in teacher education

TL				
Contribution to existing leadership	Limitation as leadership development			
development support in teacher education	support in teacher education			
Support for collaborative leadership competency	Providing only limitedly leadership			
development (see also Yada, 2024)	exercise in the direct work contexts of			
	teachers (see also Ball & Forzani, 2009;			
	Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011)			
Support for understanding leadership as a	Practical leadership development			
collective competency (see also Yada, 2024)	support conveyed as limited to students			
	(see also Ball & Forzani, 2009)			
Functioning as the place for authentically	Limited influence on deeper-level			
employing PLC type of leadership with peers and	change and transformation of student			
facilitators (see also Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009)	teachers' understandings of leadership			
	(see also Juutilainen, 2023; Matikainen,			
	2022)			
Functioning as the space for multifaceted and	Leadership development support			
conscious reflection on leadership (see also Bond,	conveyed as superficial to students (see			
2011; Lantela et al., 2024)	also Bond, 2011; Xu & Patmor, 2012)			
Supporting the development of awareness of the	Lacking coordinated continuity for the			
leadership aspect in a teacher' work/professional	later phases of the teacher education			
development from the beginning of studies;	studies (see also Bond, 2011; Heikonen			
functioning as a catalyst for continuing leadership	et al., 2023)			
development in the pre-service phase (see also				
Heikonen et al., 2023; Lantela et al., 2024)				
Supporting coherently leadership development of				
'all' teachers regardless their future leadership				
roles (see also Heikonen et al., 2023)				
Providing coordinated support for leadership				
development (see also Heikonen et al., 2023;				
Lantela et al., 2024)				
Integrable into the busy curriculum of teacher				
education (see also Xu & Patmor, 2012)				

#### 7.1.2 Leadership development towards the PLC context

According to the sub-studies, in TL, student teachers gained competency particularly in leadership that is collaborative and relational in nature (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Komives et al., 2013). This kind of leadership competency is highly relevant in a school's PLC where leadership is collectively employed, emerging through interaction with others (Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Jäppinen et al., 2016). It also encourages and includes current topical aspects for school leadership, such as inclusivity, empowerment and ethicality (Komives et al., 2013; Roberson & Perry, 2022). Regarding their achieved competency in collaborative leadership towards the PLC setting, the students developed their competency especially in the aspects of understanding and leading self and in collaboration with colleagues (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This kind of competency helps them to act effectively as a part of the whole in shared and collective leadership processes and build these processes further (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; MoEC, 2022). A significant aspect included in this two-fold leadership development of students was their strengthened personal understandings of diversity as a strength in a community and, simultaneously, as a resource provided by the community for individual members' development and the group's collective action (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Komives et al., 2013; Roberson & Perry, 2022).

Gaining perceptions of the advantages of relational and collaborative ways of leading and acting may have connections to the development of future teachers' positive attitudes to and beliefs on collaboration, which can increase their tendency for employing collaboration in their future working contexts (see Van Aalderen-Smeets & Walma van der Molen, 2015; Yada, 2020) — the aspect in which development needs still exist in the working culture of Finnish teachers (Yada, 2024). In addition to gaining perceptions of collaborative and relational ways of leading, the TL students developed practical skills in this type of leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Komives et al., 2013). These practical skills included skills such as interaction skills and competence in personally contributing to building the kind of process and environment that genuinely support the collaborative way of leading and collective way of taking action (e.g., Jäppinen et al., 2016).

According to the sub-studies, the students' leadership development in TL was broadly supported by their active participation and immersion in the TL community's daily action and operational culture in which relational and collaborative leadership played a significant role. Continuous collaboration in TL was a central support for the students' leadership development because it required and inspired them to use and develop the kind of practical interaction and collaboration skills that are needed in the successful implementation of collaborative leadership. Here, they also gained personal experience of employing collaborative leadership, which has been recognised as an effective way of learning (Argote et al., 2021; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Additionally, the continuous opportunity to observe (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991) the leadership action and culture modelled by the TL facilitators supported the

students' leadership development because it enabled them to gain insights into collaborative and relational teacher leadership and adopt what they saw and how they were 'treated' by the facilitators as part of their own action (Lunenberg et al., 2007). Included in the collaborative action in TL, shared and reflective discussions, in which the students became continuously 'exposed' to various views and opinions of TL members (Burns et al., 2002; Hord, 2009), played an important role, particularly in strengthening the students' understandings of self; these discussions resulted in the students becoming more aware of and developing views further on a personal level as persons, teachers and leaders.

It is worth noting that these central ways and processes of learning and development in TL have several connections to PLC (Hord, 1997, 2009) and the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) as approaches to learning, such as peers as resources for learning and development taking place through the authentic employment of collaborative and relational leadership in the community (see also Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022). In TL, the students developed the kind of core competency in collaborative and relational action that can be perceived as a key capacity enabling them to successfully get involving in the shared leadership and development processes for achieving common goals and meaning-making in their future professional communities (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Drawing on these perspectives, TL functioning as a pre-PLC can be perceived as the central support offered by it for student teachers' leadership development. It is important to understand the nature of the TL form of leadership development support in order to be able to holistically develop the corresponding future support further. Relatedly, it is useful to note that, in the TL community, the students acted as real-time collaborative and relational leaders by leading themselves as part of the whole and acting as co-leaders with their peers and facilitators. This finding indicates that the student teachers employed leadership in their studies instead of only preparing themselves for employing it in the future and that this employment of leadership, again, played a central role in their leadership competency development (see Rutten et al., 2022).

In light of sub-study II, which focused on exploring TL student teachers' leadership development in teacher education beyond TL, and the previous literature, the TL study group appeared as a unique leadership development support in teacher education. This was because of its specific emphasis on supporting leadership competency development towards collaborative leadership among peers and due to the demonstration of leadership as a collective, not only individual, competency (see Yada, 2024). Simultaneously, the process of supporting student teachers' leadership development in TL—through the students becoming authentically involved in collaborative leadership of the community—appeared as a rather unique way and space of supporting leadership development in comparison to the other teacher education elements. Teaching practices may enable the corresponding practice of leadership in a classroom among students but not the practice of leadership in a PLC kind of context. This is because teaching practices usually take place in a classroom and not beyond that in a school (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Väisänen, 2005), as was

also implied by sub-study II in this thesis with no student report referring to any practising beyond the classroom during teaching practice.

Although participation and immersion in TL's daily leadership action and culture appeared in the sub-studies as a valuable leadership development support, this seemed to be accompanied by certain challenges. First, leadership development of this nature took place partly in a 'hidden' way, meaning that it was embedded in the daily action that was not comprehensively framed and conceptualised as leadership practice to the students. This might explain what was implied by sub-study I regarding that the students did not seem to be fully aware of and comprehensively recognise their development in TL as leadership development. Consciousness about (leadership) development can be seen as important for deeper and transformative learning, including the profound change of student teachers' views and beliefs of teacher leadership (Matikainen, 2022; see also Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009), since it better enables aspects such as critical reflection in a given development process (Brookfield, 2017; Holdo, 2023). In the light of this thesis, the achieved development of student teachers' leadership-related views was partly contradictory: the insights they reported having gained were, as revealed by the deductive analysis, connected to collaborative and relational way of leading, but, simultaneously, the students reported partly limited leadership development regarding, particularly, practical leadership competency (see Ball & Forzani, 2009). This may refer to a relatively low level of consciousness and change among students regarding coming to see teacher leadership as a collaborative, collective and broadly informal phenomenon (cf. Komives et al., 2013; Lantela et al., 2024).

Second, the fact that the nature of TL students' leadership development process was not job-embedded, meaning that it did not have many direct connections to authentic working environments of teachers (see Säntti et al., 2018; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011), might be a factor connected to the finding that the students' development in understanding a school organisation (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) was rather limited in TL, although it did occur to a small extent. Teachers' development in understanding a school organisation is an important aspect in PLC leadership via a PLC's goal of school improvement (Hord, 1997; Jäppinen et al., 2016). According to sub-study I, the students' development in understanding the school organisation was supported, for example, in the TL exercise in which they visited a school organisation outside the teacher education programme and interviewed the leader in that organisation. This offered them insights into the variety of educational organisations, which can be seen as preliminary development in understanding the school organisation. However, TL did not include these kinds of exercises to a great extent. In conclusion, TL did not greatly add to teacher education job-embedded and real working-liferelated leadership development support (see Ball & Forzani, 2009; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011) but, as a pre-PLC kind of leadership development environment, can be seen as an innovative attempt to add to teacher education elements that, to some extent, imitate the job-embedded setting.

Third, it is worth noting that the TL group consisted of relatively homogeneous members regarding aspects such as culture, language and nationality. This is why direct conclusions cannot be drawn concerning TL's potential in supporting future teachers' competency development towards diversity-embracing approaches in more heterogeneous and multicultural settings (cf. Roberson & Perry, 2022). However, the development of a positive and respectful approach to diversity in any setting also lies at the core of operating successfully in more heterogeneous settings.

#### 7.1.3 Increasing awareness of the leadership aspect

In addition to supporting the development of student teachers' understandings of themselves as contributors to collaborative leadership processes, TL seemed to support their general awareness of themselves as teacher leaders. In TL, leadership was framed and conceptualised to the students from the beginning of their studies as an important aspect of a teacher's work and professional competency. According to sub-study II, this way of conceptualising and pointing out this aspect was not mentioned in the students' reports regarding leadership development support in the teacher education programme beyond TL. Leadership being specifically framed and conceptualised as an aspect of a student teacher's professional development has not appeared self-evident either in the light of previous research on leadership development in teacher education (Bond, 2011; Metsäpelto et al., 2021).

Relatedly, TL as leadership development support in teacher education appeared as a special element and space for multifaceted and conscious reflection on the phenomenon of teacher leadership, especially through the shared and reflective peer discussions (e.g., Hord, 2009). These discussions included, among other themes related to a teacher's work and educational phenomena, those that directly concerned the leadership theme. These discussions enabled and inspired the students to reflect, ponder and develop their views on leadership as a phenomenon in general as well as on what leadership means to them on a personal level, including what 'good' leadership means to them, how they perceive themselves as leaders and in which directions they want to develop themselves as leaders.

The TL student teachers appeared to be aware of the aspect of leadership development in initial teacher education and their potential as teacher leaders. They also seemed to actively lead their related individual development processes in their studies. It is not self-evident that student teachers possess this clear vision and strong capacity regarding their leadership development in the initial teacher education phase, since the previous literature in the field addresses the issue of student teachers not being broadly identified as potential teacher leaders, which may limit their capacity to lead their related development in their studies (Ado, 2016; Bond, 2011; Rutten et al., 2022). This study does not enable a precise evaluation of the role of TL, scheduled in the students' first year of teacher education studies, in the students' awareness regarding the aspect of leadership development in their studies. However, the perspectives mentioned above imply

that TL played a special role as a leadership development support element in teacher education in strengthening the students' awareness and understandings of leadership as a multifacetedly intrinsic aspect in a teacher's work and professional development. Thus, it seems that TL functioned as a kind of a catalyst for student teachers' leadership development in their teacher education studies. By doing so, TL seemed to supplement in a valuable way the existing leadership development support in teacher education, providing student teachers with the 'lens' that enabled them to recognise and utilise the existing teacher education context with its various elements from the perspective of leadership development support (see Bond, 2011; Xu & Patmor, 2012). Noteworthy, it is also possible that (Finnish) student teachers possess the capacity to recognise leadership as part of a teacher's professional development and competency even without specific support (Lantela et al., 2024; Sahlberg et al., 2021).

However, it should be noted that the student teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership seemed to primarily contain aspects such as leadership as the facilitation of a group and leadership based on the roles and positions possessed by individuals. It is possible that these perceptions reflect the students' understandings of leadership prior to their teacher education studies. This questions the effectiveness of TL in deepening and transforming future teachers' understandings of teacher leadership (see, e.g., Matikainen, 2022). This observation can be seen as connected to what was mentioned previously about the sub-studies not implying a profound change in the students' understandings of leadership as a collective phenomenon. Furthermore, the students' perceptions of teacher leadership or wishes for leadership development support in teacher education did not seem to include insights of teacher leadership as change agency, future making or development of well-being in a community (Alava, Kola-Torvinen & Risku, 2024; Juutilainen, 2023) – in other words, the deeper influence by and meaning of leadership employed by teachers. It is important to note that, in the present study, the student teachers were not directly asked about what teacher leadership means to them. However, the data analysis revealed several insights into this aspect.

Sub-study II implied that, in addition to TL, teacher education did not include coordinated support specifically for student teachers' leadership development; instead, the students led their leadership development processes in their studies rather independently. This is why TL seemed to make a significant contribution to the existing leadership development support in initial teacher education (see Lantela et al., 2024). Additionally, the specific benefit of TL as leadership development support in teacher education was that it was scheduled for the early phase of teacher education studies. This enabled the student teachers to utilise it as support for their continuing leadership development processes in the later phases of their studies (Heikonen et al., 2023). It is also worth noting that TL supported coherently the leadership development of all future teachers (Heikonen et al., 2023). All future teachers include both those who will later complete more leadership studies and/or assume formal

leadership roles, and those who will employ leadership informally in their future organisations.

In relation to the limitations of the leadership development support provided by TL, students mentioned that the integration of leadership content into the existing learning content (core studies in educational sciences) in TL had resulted in dealing with the leadership theme in a partly superficial way. The students expressed the wish that the leadership theme had been emphasised in TL to a greater extent, especially through more practical leadership exercises (see Ball & Forzani, 2009; Silander & Välijärvi, 2013) such as those including leading peers. Additionally, the students' perceptions regarding leadership development in TL as 'scratching the surface' were associated with the students' observations of TL having been scheduled only in the first year of their studies, lacking coordinated continuity for the later phases of their studies (cf., e.g., Heikonen et al., 2023). This is an important finding because limited continuous and coordinated support for student teachers' leadership development in initial teacher education might hinder multifaceted and whole leadership development processes (Bond, 2011; Kimball & Campbell, 2013) and, since individual students possess differing capacities in directing their learning and studying (Zhu & Doo, 2022), result in the risk of students becoming stressed, frustrated or passive in leading their personal leadership development processes. However, it is worth noting that, according to sub-study II, the students' perceptions of TL as a teacher education-integrated element benefiting their leadership development varied in alignment with the students' individual leadership development approaches and goals. Finally, it is valuable to note that the integration of the leadership theme with the other learning content in TL made TL compatible with the busy curriculum of teacher education (see Xu & Patmor, 2012) and, thus, an applicable element of leadership development support to supplement teacher education as a leadership development context.

### 7.2 Practical and pedagogical implications

Based on the present study, TL design appeared as a potential and applicable support for future teachers' leadership development in class teacher education and also other teacher education, such as subject-teacher education. This is because teachers working at any level of education benefit from high competency in collaborative PLC leadership and awareness of themselves as leaders, and because a TL implementation approach does not require a period of several years but can be completed, for example, in one year. TL could also be applied in relatively basic-level leadership education beyond teacher education, because professionals of several fields benefit from enhancing competencies in PLC leadership. The TL form of leadership development support is relatively easy to integrate with various existing learning contents, and it does not set specific requirements for the structure of (teacher) education other than the education containing a learning community with an opportunity for joint meetings.

Although employing a TL type of design remotely would change its nature, at least partial remote application could be possible, making this design applicable also in currently popular online education (see, e.g., Verdonck et al., 2024).

A specific strength of a TL type approach compared, for example, to lecturing or independent studying in leadership is leadership development occurring through the students employing collaborative and relational leadership in practice and becoming deeply immersed into and adopting this kind of action and culture as part of their own actions and beliefs (Bush & Grotjohann, 2020; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The perspective of TL as a catalyst for student teachers' leadership development supports scheduling leadership development support in the early phase of studies in the kind of teacher education programmes that last for several years (see Heikonen et al., 2023) to avoid losing the potential of the studies for supporting leadership development.

The TL design as leadership development support also included certain development needs that would be worth considering when applying corresponding designs in the future. First, continuity could be added to the support offered by TL. For example, TL meetings could continue after the first year of studying and possibly change their focus from practising core skills in collaborative leadership towards developing student teachers' deeper-level understanding and critical reflection (Holdo, 2023) of the phenomenon and significance of collective leadership action. After the first year of studying, TL could also continue functioning as a 'peer support group' and a space for sharing experiences and ideas, as well as receiving professional counselling from 'leadership-conscious' teacher educators, regarding student teachers' individual leadership development processes in their studies. TL facilitators could act as leadership development counsellors for students, for example, by assisting them in creating and monitoring personal leadership development plans (see Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021; Lejeune et al., 2023) for their time of studying and possibly even until the induction phase. In this way, TL could be utilised in the process of integrating more continuous and coherent leadership development support into teacher education.

Second, because leadership development in TL occurred broadly through the students' participation in and observations of the daily leadership action and culture of the community—instead of the kind of exercises that would have been directly framed as leadership exercises—student teachers could benefit from additional support that would help them to become more aware of their leadership development in these kinds of settings. It is important that student teachers consciously recognise where their development takes place and what kind of development they achieve. This consciousness might improve their capacity in critically reflecting on their own actions and achieved competency (Brookfield, 2017), as well as help them to maintain their study motivation and commitment (Meece et al., 2006; Wigfield et al., 2016), which are important aspects in effective learning. More specifically, student teachers could be supported in recognising their leadership development and the nature of employed leadership in the TL kind of development settings so that facilitators

could more specifically scaffold them in this process. For example, facilitators could conceptualise, make more visible and invite students to critically reflect (Matikainen, 2022; see also Holdo, 2023) on where their leadership development takes place, what kind of leadership development they achieve and the leadership-related challenges they face regarding leadership employed in the community. In this way, students could be supported in shaping their possibly partly stereotype-based prior views and assumptions (Juutilainen, 2023; Putnam & Borko, 1997) of teacher leadership as based on individual/positional aspects and a strict leader-follower division. The support described above could, simultaneously, help students to shape their interpretations of leadership in TL as 'blurry' and the TL practices and actions as 'just working as a group' into leading and practising leadership together (see Wenger, 1998).

Relatedly, from the perspective of preparing future teachers with topical competencies for implementing the shared vision and initiating change in educational contexts (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024), it would be important that teacher education not only supports them in recognising the leadership aspect in a teacher's 'daily' work but also the deeper purposes and meanings of teacher leadership, such as change agency, future making and development of wellbeing in a community (e.g., Alava, Kola-Torvinen & Risku, 2024). This support could include 1) teacher educators discussing with the students these deeper aspects of leadership as well as the critical phenomena taking place in educational contexts presently and in the near-future, 2) teacher educators inviting the students to explore the kinds of deeper influence they personally want to promote through their work and 3) teacher educators encouraging the students to think about realistic ways of demonstrating this deeper-level leadership action in their future working lives. It is also worth noting that, for example, (collective) change making is a skill that can be practiced. To enhance the related competencies of student teachers, collective and collaboration-based workshops for making 'change' or achieving a shared development goal in the student teacher learning community or in other teacher education-related settings could be integrated into teacher education (Matikainen, 2022; Ramamoorthi et al., 2021).

Third, the present study revealed that, according to student perceptions, TL as well as the broader teacher education context included limited practical leadership exercises and job-embedded leadership practice (see Ball & Forzani, 2009; Säntti et al., 2018; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011). A central idea in Finnish teacher education has been to support student teachers' professional development through combining theory and reflection with practice (Silander & Välijärvi, 2013). This combination has been perceived as effective in enhancing student teachers' professional competency, which is why it would be relevant to also provide student teachers with opportunities to try and observe leading in practice in the school context (Ado, 2016; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) — not only in the classroom but beyond, too (see, e.g., Pietarinen et al., 2016). For instance, job-embedded leadership exercises reaching beyond the classroom could be included in teaching practices by replacing a small amount of practising and

observing teaching in a classroom with student teachers participating in school-level development projects or observing professional community members and positional school leaders planning and implementing school-level development work (see Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Job-embedded leadership practice could be one way to help student teachers to develop their understanding of a school organisation—the aspect of leadership development that was identified as being rather limited among the participants. Job-embedded leadership practice could also help student teachers to transfer the competences gained in their studies to their working contexts in the induction phase and provide them with a stronger capacity to observe leadership and assume a leadership stance in their future organisations (Ado, 2016). However, the pre-PLC kind of design appears as an innovative design for practising leadership for teachers' working contexts when the integration of direct working-life connections into teacher education is not possible. Still, it is important to note that the transference of competency gained in a TL kind of design to the job-embedded setting is a complex process (Lauder et al., 1999). This is because when student teachers transition from the pre-service setting to the work setting, they join a new community and its culture and face changes in the context and purpose from individual development to complex school development. This is why, in the future, it would be important that TL types of designs also include discussion on the strategies and possible challenges related to the transference of collaborative leadership competency to future working contexts, especially if future teachers face a contrasting leadership and organisation culture (see Blomberg, 2008). Additionally, it would be worth building a continuum of leadership development support from pre-service to the induction phase (Heikonen et al., 2023). Novice teachers could benefit from the kind of tailored opportunities for continuous learning in leadership that would consider both their early career phase and the development needs of their leadership competency in light of their more specified job descriptions and working contexts revealed by the induction phase (see Ado, 2016; Eteläpelto et al., 2015).

It is worth noting that the roles such as a teacher leader modeller, leadership educator and leadership development counsellor—that were identified or suggested in this thesis as roles for teacher educators—are not the roles traditionally connected to teacher educators. Thus, in the future, it should be ensured that teacher educators playing these roles are sufficiently supported in their related professional development (Lunenberg et al., 2007; see also Ping et al., 2018). In these roles, they are required to possess high competence in critically reflecting on their own leadership actions as teacher leader role models (see Lunenberg et al., 2007) and a profound understanding of the nature of leadership development in the initial teacher education phase. The challenges and development needs of TL as leadership development support recognised in this thesis, such as student-reported blurriness and superficiality, overlap with the challenges identified more generally as typical for phenomenon-based studying (Kostiainen & Tarnanen, 2020), which studying in TL drew on. Thus, facilitators of leadership development in TL-type designs need

expertise in and knowledge of the nature of studying in these kinds of designs to be able to find the balance regarding how to sufficiently but not overly support student teachers in their relatively self-directed studying (Kostiainen & Tarnanen, 2020). However, it should be noted that a phenomenon-based approach was not necessarily the primary reason behind why the students sensed, for example, superficiality in relation to dealing with the leadership theme in TL. Instead, student-reported challenges of leadership development content and action in TL seemed to be caused by certain difficulties in integrating a new theme—leadership—into the existing tight teacher education curriculum with multiple learning contents (see Xu & Patmor, 2012). Thus, in the future, solutions for finding more space for integrating the leadership theme into teacher education would be worth searching for.

It is important to note that, in the TL design, leadership-related learning contents and practices were tailored to first-year student teachers with relatively limited previous experience in leadership in a teacher's work and in the school context. In TL, student teachers primarily practised basic skills and competences in collaborative and relational leadership, such as leading oneself as part of a whole and interacting dialogically with others to achieve common goals. When applying a TL style of leadership development support in the kind of teacher education studies or in-service training in which the participants possess relatively more previous experience and understanding of school and PLC leadership, it should be ensured that the practised skills and competences are sufficiently challenging to them, meeting the leadership-related development needs of the participants and those of the possible organisations or expertise areas they represent. Finally, when designing and developing leadership development support in teacher education, it is always important to ask what this requires from the specific involved groups, such as teacher educators, curriculum designers and student teachers, and what is/could be the related role of and effort from school leaders, education policymakers and funding agents.

#### 7.3 Limitations and future directions

The present study has certain limitations. The number of participants was relatively small regarding, especially, sub-study II with five student teacher participants and sub-study III with three facilitator participants. This means that the findings cannot be generalised beyond the examined participants. However, the qualitative data were thick and the results are, with certain preconditions, potentially transferable to other corresponding contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Regarding the examination of TL, the sample is highly representative because all TL students except one and all TL facilitators participated in the present study. Exploring a phenomenon through participants' perceptions includes a limitation regarding the lack of an external perspective gained, for example, through observation (Patton, 2015). This study did not pursue external measuring but

suggests that as a complementary approach worth applying in the examination of student teachers' leadership development in the future.

The majority of data were collected during the first year of the students' teacher education studies, resulting in limitations regarding further and longerterm exploration of the students' leadership development in the later phases of their studies. On the other hand, study groups were active specifically during the first year of teacher education studies, which makes scheduling of the data collection at the end of the first academic year relevant in the context of this study. Relatedly, the examination of student teachers' leadership development in the early phase of their studies can be seen as a special value of the present study and a rather unique contribution to the previous literature. LDT, which was applied as the theoretical lens in sub-study I, was not fully suitable for exploring leadership development among student teachers since the leadership development process described by it is closely connected to a teacher's own working context and organisational setting. However, the special value of LDT in this study was its capacity in identifying as leadership skills those skills that might often be ignored as leadership skills, such as listening skills. It was also well suited to examining leadership development in TL with connections to a PLC style of competency development setting.

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of a topical phenomenon (MoEC, 2022) scarcely studied previously - how (Finnish) student teachers' leadership development occurs in pre-service teacher education and, particularly, in the novel TL design. The problem-driven approach (Krippendorff, 2013) in the analysis process enabled a relevant research focus and research questions in light of these previously identified broader aims. The combination of theory-driven and data-driven reasoning in the analyses of the sub-studies appeared valuable in the context of this study. First, the application of leadershiprelated theoretical lenses enabled and justified identifying the competencies and actions in TL as those related to leadership. Second, the data-driven approach enabled sensitivity to the data and the participants' views (Tracy, 2010) revealing, for example, individual students' nuanced leadership development approaches. Third, the combination of deductive and inductive reasoning revealed a contradiction worth noting between the leadership competencies the students developed in light of leadership theories and how this achievement of leadership competencies was conveyed to them.

The interview schedules, too, included several limitations. In the focus group interviews, the students were not separately asked about their leadership development in TL, only about their competency development in TL in general. Of this general competency development they, unpromptedly, identified part as leadership development. The interpretation in sub-study I regarding the student teachers having not fully recognised their leadership development in TL was based on this setting. This approach can be seen to contain both strengths and weaknesses regarding credibility. In sub-study II, the participants could have been asked about their previous leadership experience, which could have also enabled gaining more specific insight into the previous leadership experience of

the students adopting a personality-driven approach who emphasised the reflective approach to their leadership development. In sub-study III, the interview data did not enable a deeper examination of how conscious the students were about their development in relational leadership in TL, although sub-study I, which was based on the same interview data, gave hints of this. Overall, this research did not include the examination of the students' leadership-related skills, experiences and views prior to their studies or insights into how they employed leadership in their future school contexts, which results in limitations for making strict conclusions about the role and impact of TL as their leadership development support.

The present study focused more on the leadership development processes than, for example, the content of the students' understandings of leadership. However, gaining a deeper understanding of what kinds of leadership-related conceptions future teachers possess could enable identifying possible critical tendencies and deficiencies in these conceptions, such as views of leadership only as an individual attribute, to support the development of these understandings further (see, e.g., Juutilainen, 2023). In the future, it would also be interesting to gain deeper insights into what kind of role student teachers' leadership- and educational organisation-related perceptions and experiences prior to their teacher education studies play in their study-time leadership development. Additionally, it would be valuable to study how student teachers' leadership competency develops in teacher education as a whole until their graduation phase, how they transfer the leadership competency gained in their studies to their working contexts in the induction phase, and what kinds of topical and specific leadership development needs they face in the induction phase. Examination of these aspects would be important since it could increase the understanding of what aspects should be specifically considered in developing leadership development support for future teachers and what factors might either support or prevent the competency transference to their future working contexts (see Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Additionally, examination of the aspects mentioned above could help to clarify what should be at the focus of near-future research on educational leadership for making the most out of that research as a means of providing future educational leaders with the kind of competency they genuinely need.

To specifically explore the impact of the community-based leadership development support integrated in teacher education, such as TL, it would be interesting to study how the leadership readiness of those novice teachers with prior participation in a community-based design is assessed by their colleagues and superiors (e.g., Ross et al., 2011) — in comparison to those novice teachers with no prior leadership development support or with different kinds of support, such as having participated in lectures on leadership. This could provide further understanding of whether community-based leadership development designs have specific value as a means of preparing future teacher leaders. Finally, it would be interesting to explore how including more support for students becoming aware of and critically reflecting on their leadership development in TL-style designs would possibly change and deepen their leadership development.

#### 8 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis was to explore student teachers' leadership development in initial teacher education, focusing on the TL design in which leadership development was broadly rooted in peer collaboration in the pre-PLC setting. In a broader picture of enhancing leadership development support in Finnish teacher education, the TL design functioned as a pilot that sought to arrange innovative leadership development support in the early phase of class teacher education studies. This thesis indicates that TL and the corresponding future designs have potential as ways of supporting leadership development and that they may valuably supplement and meet several development needs of teacher education as a leadership development context. TL kind of designs may help in providing future teachers with the kind of topical leadership competency that is required to enact leadership collaboratively and collectively in educational organisations (MoEC, 2022) to improve their efficacy, innovativeness and sustainability (Jäppinen & Taajamo, 2022; Yada, 2020). This competency includes openness and a positive attitude to taking collaborative action as a collective where diverse views of community members are perceived as an important resource in the process of pursuing common goals (Roberson & Perry, 2022; Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024; see also Jantunen et al., 2022).

The present study contributes to educational policy, teacher education development work and previous research in the field in several ways. First, this study is the first to provide research-based information of a new leadership development design piloting an innovative way of arranging leadership development support in the early phase of teacher education, conducted in collaboration with the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. Concurrently, the present study is aligned with the main objectives of the Teacher Education Development Programme (MoEC, 2022) by providing research-based information of leadership development support in teacher education. This information can be utilised in designing future solutions for enhancing leadership development in teacher education. Through presenting initial teacher education as a potential leadership development context and student teachers as both potential and real-time leaders in their studies, this thesis contributes to the

change of the paradigm of seeing student and novice teachers as teacher leaders and, thus, supporting their leadership development from the early phase of their careers (Nolan & Palazzolo, 2011). This perspective potentially encourages aligned approaches and initiatives regarding future research in the field and the development of teacher education practices. Additionally, by applying the LDT (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) and RL (Komives et al., 2013) models in the preservice setting and discussing their related limitations and potential, this study contributes to the work on developing theoretical approaches that are sensitive to identifying and supporting leadership development in initial teacher education.

The present study indicates that, in TL, student teachers enhanced specifically basic competency in collaborative teacher leadership. These basic skills in leadership included students coming to see themselves as part of the phenomenon of leadership, which is an important basis for further leadership development (Heikonen et al., 2023) and an important aspect in collectively employed leadership (see MoEC, 2022). In this way, TL-type designs can make a valuable contribution to building the continuum of leadership development in teachers' careers and be utilised as the kind of leadership development support that is suitable for preparing future teachers for the variety of leadership and the diversity of leader identities, not only for formal leadership roles. However, more discussion should be conducted at the societal level and in teacher education on what teacher leadership and its influence could precisely include in the present and future field of education. It is worth noting that in the present study student teachers seemed to perceive teacher leadership in relation to aspects such as classroom management, pedagogical expertise or becoming a principal instead of deeper social and societal influence, such as teachers as 'creators of the future' and 'well-being of their local communities' (Alava, Kola-Torvinen & Risku, 2024, p. 35; see also Ronkainen et al., 2023). To prepare future teacher leaders with the capacity for understanding the future, well-being or other aspects they aim to promote, they should also be supported in profoundly developing their understanding of the specificities of the near-future Finnish school context in which they are supposed to influence (e.g., Hanhimäki et al., 2024; Jantunen et al., 2022).

It should be noted that the study group structure—within which TL functioned—is not generally integrated in Finnish teacher education, which may, currently, set certain limitations for applying the TL model of leadership development support in a broader manner. However, the present thesis, emphasising the value of a collaborative learning community (see Hord, 2009) as a central resource in leadership development, suggests that it would be worth considering whether a study-group-based structure and pedagogy should be applied more broadly in Finnish teacher education for supporting future teachers' leadership and other professional development. Community-based studying could also further help to change the studying culture in teacher education towards the kind in which student teachers are multifacetedly active contributors to their professional development and builders of their learning environments—

in other words, actions that are about authentically practising teacher leadership for their future working lives.

The mission of initial teacher education is to provide future teachers with core skills in leadership, but there might not yet exist a clear and common consensus and vision about what these core skills specifically contain. Achieving this kind of consensus could further fuel establishing relevant, efficient and sustainable leadership development support that would meet the needs of educational organisations. This thesis suggests that the discussion about the purpose, aim and sufficient level of leadership development and the related support in initial teacher education should be continued among those parties who are responsible for designing and providing teacher education, those holding the vantage points to the current state and future requirements of leadership in educational organisations, and those involved in the related educational policy- and decision-making. At the national level, this discussion could be facilitated, for example, by the Teacher Education Forum. It is also important to note that developing the kind of leadership development solutions that would be sufficiently uniform between various (class) teacher education programmes—although sufficiently flexible for utilising the unique approaches and strengths of different universities (Heikonen et al., 2023) – would set future teachers into a more equal position regarding their preparation for leading in their future organisations. Developing coherent leadership development support is, in Finland, particularly topical concerning class teacher education, of which curricula include specific support for leadership development less consistently than, for example, the curricula of early childhood teacher education currently do as the result of the recently increased identification of early childhood education teachers as leaders (e.g., Fonsén et al., 2023).

If support for competency development in the kind of leadership that is collaborative and collective in nature is chosen to be emphasised in future teacher education—as this thesis suggests—the current structures and leadership cultures of educational organisations and teachers' work should be developed accordingly (see Lahtero et al., 2017; MoEC, 2022). This would provide future teachers with genuine opportunities to transfer their gained collaborative leadership competency to the working context and to continuously develop as collaborative leaders and promoters of collaborative leadership in their communities. Naturally, providing future teachers with strong capacity in collaborative leadership is, itself, an important key for changing the leadership cultures of educational organisations towards more shared leadership that enables shared meaning-making and action for the core mission of these organisations-student learning. Finally, leadership research in the field of education needs to stay current to remain capable of supporting the leadership development of educational professionals in their various career stages and educational organisations in their constantly changing operational environments.

#### **YHTEENVETO**

väitöstutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuusosaamisen kehittymistä suomalaiseen luokanopettajakoulutukseen integroidussa opiskeluryhmässä, josta tutkimuksessa käytettiin pseudonyymia TL (teacher leadership study group). TL ajoittui opettajaopiskelijoiden ensimmäiseen opiskeluvuoteen ja sen erityisenä tavoitteena oli vahvistaa tulevien opettajien johtajuusosaamista. Opettajien johtajuutta lähestyttiin tässä väitöskirjassa erityisesti koulun ammatillisessa yhteisössä toteutettavan yhteistoiminnallisen johtajuuden näkökulmasta (esim. Jäppinen ym., 2016), vaikkakin samalla toteuttaman johtajuuden moninaisuus. huomioitiin opettajien Yhteistoiminnallisen johtajuusosaamisen tarve suomalaisissa kasvatus- ja koulutusalan organisaatioissa on ajankohtainen (MoEC, 2022). Tällaisessa johtajuudessa jokainen ammatillisen yhteisön jäsen, mukaan lukien uransa alussa olevat opettajat, on johtaja. Tästä syystä on tärkeää, että tulevat opettajat saavat perustutkintokoulutusvaiheessa riittävästi tukea johtajuusosaamisensa kehittämiseen. Perustutkintokoulutusvaiheen sisältämä johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen tuki on kuitenkin arvioitu riittämättömäksi (esim. Bond, 2011; Murphy, 2005). Suomessa opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö onkin linjannut, että opettajien johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen tukea tulee kehittää opettajankoulutuksessa ja tämä tulee tehdä tutkimukseen perustuen (MoEC, 2022).

Tämän väitöstutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tarkastella, sosiokulttuuriseen teoriaan (Vygotsky, 1978; ks. myös Eteläpelto ym., 2014) ja sosiokonstruktivismiin (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) kiinnittyen, minkälaista oli opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuusosaamisen kehittyminen TL-opiskeluryhmässä ja minkälaisena johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen tukena TL näyttäytyi osana laajempaa luokanopettajakoulutusohjelmaa. Ensimmäinen ja kolmas osatutkimus tarkastelivat opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuuskehittymistä TL-opiskeluryhmänssä. Toinen osatutkimus tarkasteli johtajuuskehittymistä TL-opiskeluryhmän laajemmassa kontekstissa eli luokanopettajakoulutusohjelmassa, pyrkien samalla lisäämään ymmärrystä TL-opiskeluryhmän roolista johtajuuskehittymisen tukena opettajankoulutuksessa.

Ensimmäisen osatutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tarkastella opiskelijoiden havaintoja siitä, millaista johtajuusosaamista he saavuttivat TLopiskeluryhmässä ja mikä tätä osaamiskehittymistä tuki. Tutkimukseen osallistui 15 opettajaopiskelijaa. Aineisto kerättiin fokusryhmähaastatteluilla teemahaastattelumenetelmää käyttäen (Patton, 2015) opettajaopiskelijoiden ensimmäisen opiskeluvuoden lopussa ja analysoitiin laadullisen ongelmalähtöisen sisällönanalyysin avulla (Krippendorff, 2013). Johtajuusosaamisen tarkastelun teoreettisena linssinä hyödynnettiin Katzenmeyerin ja Mollerin (2009) leadership development for teachers -mallia. Tutkimuksen mukaan opettajaopiskelijoiden osaaminen kehittyi erityisesti itsensä johtamisen ja yhdessä kollegoiden kanssa johtamisen alueilla (ks. Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) ja tätä kehittymistä tuki TL-opiskeluryhmässä erityisesti yhteistoiminnallinen toimintatapa. On huomionarvoista, että kun opiskelijoiden havaintoja johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisestä lähestyttiin teorialähtöisen tarkastelun sijaan aineistolähtöisesti, opiskelijat arvioivat TL-opiskeluryhmässä saavuttamansa johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen melko vähäiseksi. Kokonaisuudessaan TL-opiskeluryhmä näyttäytyi potentiaalisena tuen muotona tulevien opettajien johtajuusosaamisen vahvistamiseen kohti kasvatus- ja koulutusorganisaatioissa ajankohtaisesti tarvittua yhteistoiminnallista johtajuutta, mutta osoitti myös, että jatkossa vastaavanlaisissa toteutuksissa opettajaopiskelijoille on tärkeää tarjota enemmän tukea oman johtajuuskehittymisensä tunnistamiseen sekä johtajuuskehittymisen laajentamiseen kohti kouluorganisaation vahvempaa ymmärtämistä (ks. Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Toinen osatutkimus tarkasteli opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuuskehittymistä luokanopettajakoulutusohjelmassa laajemmin. Tutkimukseen osallistui viisi TLopettajaopiskelijaa. Aineistona käytettiin opiskelijoiden kirjoittamia motivaatiokirjeitä, jotka olivat osa valintaprosessia TL-opiskeluryhmään luokanopettajaopintojen alussa, sekä teemahaastattelumenetelmällä toteutettuja yksilöhaastatteluja, joihin opiskelijat osallistuivat kolmannen opiskeluvuoden alussa. Aineisto analysoitiin laadullisen ongelmalähtöisen sisällönanalyysin avulla. Tutkimuksen opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuuskehittyminen, sisältäen johtajuuskehittymiseen liittyvät tavoitteensa ja tapansa hyödyntää luokanopettajakoulutuskontekstia kehittymisprosessissa, oli yksilöllistä. He vaikuttivat ohjaavan omaa johtajuuskehittymistään luokanopettajakoulutuksessa ilman koulutusohjelman tarjoamaa erityistä tai koordinoitua tukea, lukuun ottamatta TL-opiskeluryhmää, johon opiskelijat osallistuivat ensimmäisen opiskeluvuoden aikana. Opiskelijat vaikuttivat kuitenkin olevan tietoisia johtajuuskehittymisestä osana opettajaopiskelijan ammatillista kehittymistä ja hyödyntävän luokanopettajakoulutusta oman johtajuuskehittymisensä tukemiseen suhteellisen monipuolisesti.

Toinen osatutkimus antaa viitteitä siitä, että opintojen alkuun ajoittunut TL-opiskeluryhmä, jossa johtajuutta käsiteltiin keskeisenä osana opettajan tehtävää ja ammatillista kehittymistä, toimi eräänlaisena opettajaopiskelijoiden opintojen aikaisten laajempien johtajuuskehittymisprosessien käynnistäjänä. Toisen osatutkimuksen mukaan TL-tyyppisen johtajuuskehittymisen tuen ajoittaminen jo opettajankoulutuksen alkuvaiheeseen saattaa auttaa koko koulutusohjelman olemassa olevan potentiaalin hyödyntämisessä opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuuskehittymisen tukena. Toisaalta toinen osatutkimus nostaa esiin tarpeen jatkuvampaan ja koordinoidumpaan johtajuuskehittymisen tukeen sekä käytännön johtajuusharjoitteluun luokanopettajakoulutuksessa mahdollisimman monipuolisten johtajuuskehittymisprosessien mahdollistamiseksi.

Kolmannessa osatutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin TL-opiskeluryhmässä toteutettavaa johtajuutta siinä viitekehyksessä, miten se tuki opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuusosaamisen kehittymistä. Tutkimuksen lähtökohtana oli, että autenttiseen johtajuustoimintaan osallistuminen sekä johtajuuden mallintaminen ja vastavuoroisesti havainnoiminen ovat keskeisiä keinoja ja prosesseja johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen tukemisessa (ks. esim. Bandura, 1977, 1986; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Tutkimukseen osallistui 15 opettajaopiskelijaa ja kolme opettajan-

kouluttajaa. Aineisto kerättiin teemahaastattelumenetelmällä toteutetuilla fokusryhmähaastatteluilla opiskelijoiden ensimmäisen opiskeluvuoden lopussa. Opiskelijoiden haastatteluaineiston osalta kyseessä oli sama aineisto kuin ensimmäisessä osatutkimuksessa. Aineisto analysoitiin laadullisen sisällönanalyysin avulla (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Tutkimuksessa tarkastelun kohteena oli sekä opettajaopiskelijoiden että opettajankouluttajien toteuttama johtajuus. Tarkastelussa käytettiin teoreettisena linssinä Komivesin ja kollegoiden (2013) suhdeperustaisen johtajuuden mallia (relational leadership model). Tutkimuksen mukaan suhdeperustaista johtajuutta toteutettiin ryhmässä monipuolisesti. Opettajaopiskelijat osallistuivat aktiivisesti johtajuuden toteuttamiseen ryhmässä yhdessä opettajankouluttajien kanssa, hankkien tällä tavoin omakohtaista käytännön kokemusta ja tehden havaintoja suhdeperustaisesta johtajuustoiminnasta. Näihin havaintoihin sisältyi muun muassa huomio ryhmäläisten yksilöllisistä ja keskenään erilaisista näkemyksistä ryhmän potentiaalia kasvattavana tekijänä sekä ryhmätyöskentelystä tehokkaana toimintamenetelmänä. Haasteena nähtiin yhteistoiminnalliseen tavoitteenasetteluun ja päätöksentekoon liittyvä epäselkeys.

Kolmannessa osatutkimuksessa TL-tyyppinen johtajuuskehittymisen tuki näyttäytyi tehokkaana, koska se vaikutti vahvistavan tulevien opettajien yhteistoiminnallisia toimintatapoja sekä positiivisia näkemyksiä suhdeperustaisesta johtajuudesta. Tämä voi edistää sellaista opettajaopiskelijoiden syvempää uskomusten ja asenteiden kehittymistä, mikä tukee heidän kasvuaan johtajiksi, jotka aidosti toteuttavat ja edistävät yhteistoiminnallista johtajuutta tulevassa työelämässään (ks. Yada, 2020). Kolmas osatutkimus osoitti myös, että opettajankouluttajat eivät toimi vain opettajuuden vaan myös opettajajohtajuuden mallintajina ja kouluttajina tuleville opettajille. Tätä roolia ja tehtävää ei ole aiemmin juurikaan tunnistettu opettajankouluttajien ammatillisen toiminnan aspektina. Jatkossa opettajankouluttajien ammatillisen osaamisen kehittymistä olisikin tärkeää tukea tämän roolin näkökulmasta, koska johtajuuden mallintaminen vaatii vahvaa ja kokonaisvaltaista kykyä reflektoiva kriittisesti omaa johtajuustoimintaansa. Kolmas osatutkimus ei osoittanut, johtajuuskehityksestään tietoisia opettajaopiskelijat olivat opiskeluryhmässä eikä myöskään sitä, missä määrin opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuusosaaminen kehittyi kohti myönteistä suhtautumista moninaisuuteen sellaisissa yhteisöissä, joiden jäsenet edustavat TL-opiskeluryhmää vahvempaa moninaisuutta esimerkiksi erilaisten kulttuurien ja kansallisuuksien suhteen (esim. Jantunen et al., 2022)

Tämän väitöstutkimuksen mukaan opettajaopiskelijoiden osaaminen kehittyi luokanopettajakoulutukseen integroidussa TL-opiskeluryhmässä erityisesti yhteistoiminnallisen johtajuuden alueella (ks. MoEC, 2022). Lisäksi opiskelijoiden tietoisuus johtajuudesta osana opettajan työtä ja ammatillista kehittymistä vahvistui. Keskeisenä johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen tukena TL-opiskeluryhmässä näyttäytyi yhteistoiminnallisen johtajuuden toteuttaminen käytännössä sekä johtajuusaiheiset vertaiskeskustelut. TL-opiskeluryhmän ajoittuminen opettajaopintojen alkuvaiheeseen oli tärkeää, koska se vaikutti mahdol-

listavan ryhmän toimimisen eräänlaisena opiskelijoiden pidempiaikaisten johtajuuskehittymisprosessien "käynnistäjänä". Tämän väitöstutkimuksen perusteella TL-opiskeluryhmä ei tukenut erityisen tehokkaasti tulevien opettajien johtajuuskäsitysten syvempää muutosta: opettajaopiskelijat eivät esimerkiksi kokonaisvaltaisesti tunnistaneet yhteistoiminnallista johtamistapaa johtajuudeksi tai nostaneet esiin muutostoimijuuteen liittyviä ulottuvuuksia osana opettajien toteuttamaa johtajuutta.

TL-tyyppisellä johtajuusosaamisen kehittämisen tuella voidaan vastata useaan suomalaisen opettajakoulutuksen ajankohtaiseen kehittämistarpeeseen koskien johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen tukea. Jatkossa vastaavanlaista tukea toteutettaessa ja kehitettäessä tulee huomioida, miten opettajaopiskelijoita voidaan vahvemmin tukea johtajuuskehittymisensä tunnistamisessa, johtajuuteen liittyvän ymmärryksen syventämisessä sekä millä tavoin heille voitaisiin tarjota mahdollisuuksia vahvemmin työelämään kiinnittyvään johtajuusharjoitteluun. Työelämäpohjainen harjoittelu voisi auttaa heitä siirtämään hankkimaansa osaamista käytäntöön heidän siirtyessään työelämään sekä vahvistaa heidän ymmärrystään kouluorganisaation toiminnasta.

Tämä väitöstutkimus pyrki lisäämään ymmärrystä johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisestä opettajien perustutkintokoulutusvaiheessa sekä vahvistamaan käsitystä opettajaopiskelijoista ja työuraansa aloittavista opettajista johtajina. Väitöskirjan tavoitteena oli samalla, linjassa opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön asettamien tavoitteiden kanssa (MoEC, 2022), edistää tutkimusperustaista johtajuusosaamisen kehittymisen tuen kehittämistä suomalaisessa opettajankoulutuksessa. Tämän väitöstutkimuksen keskeisenä rajoitteena on aineistonkeruun ajoittuminen pääosin opettajaopiskelijoiden ensimmäisen opiskeluvuoden loppuun, mistä syystä tutkimus ei tarjoa laajempaa näkökulmaa heidän johtajuuskehittymisestään luokanopettajakoulutuksessa eikä mahdollista TLopiskeluryhmän tehokkuuden arvioimista siitä näkökulmasta, missä määrin opettajaopiskelijat sovelsivat hankkimaansa johtajuusosaamista tulevassa työelämässään. Jatkossa olisikin tärkeää tutkia, miten opettajaopiskelijoiden johtajuusosaaminen kehittyy opettajankoulutuksessa kokonaisuudessaan, miten he siirtävät osaamistaan käytäntöön työelämään siirryttyään ja minkälaisia ajankohtaisia johtajuusosaamisen kehittämistarpeita he työelämään siirryttyään kohtaavat. Tällainen tutkimus olisi tärkeää, koska se auttaisi lisäämään ymmärrystä siitä, mihin opettajien johtajuusosaamisen kehittämisessä tulisi jatkossa kiinnittää erityistä huomioita sekä mihin kasvatus- ja koulutusalan johtajuuden tutkimusta tulisi fokusoida, jotta se palvelisi parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla kasvatus- ja koulutusalan toimijoiden sekä organisaatioiden johtajuusosaamisen kehittämistä sellaiseksi, mitä kasvatus- ja koulutusalalla nykyhetkessä ja lähitulevaisuudessa aidosti tarvitaan.

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## **ORIGINAL PAPERS**

I

# FINNISH STUDENT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN A STUDY GROUP INTERVENTION TO ENHANCE THEIR TEACHER LEADERSHIP

by

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Article



Finnish Student Teachers'
Perceptions of Their
Leadership Development in
a Study Group Intervention
to Enhance Their Teacher
Leadership

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#### **Abstract**

This study, conducted within a Finnish teacher education program, examined student teachers' perceptions of their skills development in a study group intervention designed to enhance their teacher leadership. Data were collected via semi-structured focus group interviews with the student teachers (n = 15) and examined using qualitative content analysis. Katzenmeyer and Moller's leadership development for teachers model was utilized as the theoretical framework. The results indicate that through collaboration, the student teachers developed leadership skills, especially in personal assessment and influencing strategies, but need more support to be able to better recognize these skills as leadership skills.

#### **Keywords**

teacher leadership, study group intervention, teacher leadership skills development, collaboration, class teacher education

#### Introduction

Teacher leadership plays an important role in establishing effective, high-quality schools and education (Harris & Jones, 2019; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Xu &

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Patmor, 2012). The foundation for continuous leadership development (Bond, 2011; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Xu & Patmor, 2012) and teachers' preparedness for assuming leadership roles in the novice phase (Ado, 2016; Ryan, 2009; Szeto & Cheng, 2018) is laid in initial teacher education. However, previous research on teacher leadership development has mostly concerned in-service teachers, while similar research among pre-service teachers, especially outside the Anglo-Saxon setting (cf. Ado, 2016; Leonard et al., 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), has been limited. Moreover, in the existing theoretical and empirical literature on teacher leadership development in the pre-service setting, scholars point out challenges in providing support for this development in teacher education. These challenges include difficulties in recognizing student teachers' leadership potential (Bond, 2011; Rutten et al., 2022); identifying the skills they develop, such as social and classroom management skills (see, e.g., Kwok, 2023; Tynjälä et al., 2016), as leadership skills; and including a sufficient number of leadership exercises in the busy curriculum of the pre-service setting (Bond, 2011; Xu & Patmor, 2012).

In the present study, we examined teacher leadership development and the aspects that support it in initial teacher education. More precisely, we examined the development of leadership skills among student teachers in a study group intervention designed to enhance their teacher leadership. The study group was conducted as part of a Finnish class teacher education program, and it is referred to as the teacher leadership (TL) study group. The TL intervention was intended to respond to the need to increase support for teacher leadership development in initial teacher education—a challenge highlighted by many scholars (cf., e.g., Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016; Rutten et al., 2022; Xu & Patmor, 2012) as well as the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture—and to develop teacher education based on research (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). At the time of the data collection for this research, the TL study group was convening for the first time and had not been studied previously.

The present research focuses on the student teachers' perceptions of their own skills development in the TL study group. With the concept of "perception," we refer to the student teachers' subjective views on and conceptions of their (achieved) development. When conducting activities that aim to develop the skills of a certain target group (e.g., the TL student teachers), it is relevant to examine how the action and the development that is assumed to be achieved through it are conveyed to the target group members themselves (cf., e.g., Brookfield, 2017). This approach may enable us to gain insight into what kinds of skills the student teachers identify themselves as developing (cf. Brookfield, 2017), resulting in a better understanding of how they can be supported in recognizing their development and how the student teachers see the value of the action introduced for their development (Eddy et al., 2015). These factors have connections to student engagement (Meece et al., 2006) and performance (Kahu & Nelson, 2018), and they may help develop the given actions in the future (cf., e.g., Paufler et al., 2022). Moreover, previous research indicates that student teachers' perceptions of their development tend to correspond to their real-life competence levels (see, e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Saloviita, 2019).

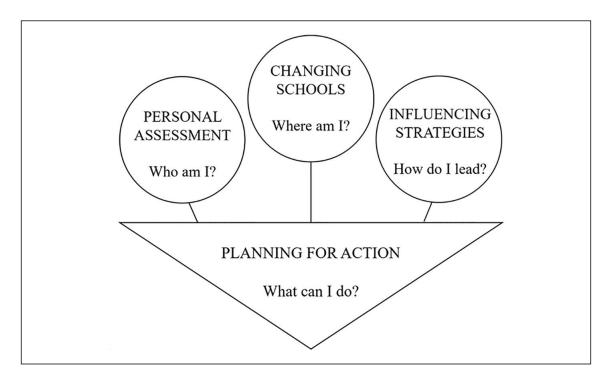


Figure 1. The LDT model (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009, p. 53).

The student teachers' perceptions that we examine in this study concern, first, their development of teacher leadership skills in the TL study group, which is approached through the lens of Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) leadership development for teachers (LDT) model. The LDT model has not previously been applied in the examination of teacher leadership skills development in the Finnish pre-service teacher education setting, which is why we want to investigate its applicability in this context. Second, we examine the student teachers' perceptions of how collaboration in the TL study group supported their LDT skills development. Third, we examine which aspects of the development of their LDT skills the student teachers themselves perceived as contributing to leadership skills development.

# Development Toward Teacher Leadership: The LDT Model

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) emphasized that building a learning community of teachers and working to improve educational practices are the central responsibilities of teacher leadership (see also Murphy, 2005; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Their LDT model focuses on how teachers should be prepared for leadership roles (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This model acknowledges the collaborative nature of teacher leadership, both in the skill sets required and the process of becoming a leader. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) suggested that their model is designed to support and examine teachers' leadership development at various career phases, including the pre-service stage. In the LDT model, teachers' leadership development is classified into three levels: teachers coming to understand themselves, their colleagues, and their schools. The LDT model, with its four components, is presented in Figure 1.

Personal assessment (PA) development involves teachers better understanding themselves as professionals, including their beliefs and strengths. An important part of PA development is recognizing that their colleagues are different; they may think differently and have different strengths compared to themselves. Recognizing this results in acceptance of the differences among members of the professional community as an important resource to be embraced. Additionally, gaining knowledge in adult development, another aspect of PA, increases teachers' ability to receive support and feedback targeted at their individual needs and provide such support and feedback to others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Development in changing schools (CS) involves teachers gaining a deeper understanding of the broader school organization beyond their own classrooms and subject areas. Teachers come to know their school's culture better and generate their own understanding of teacher leadership—what it means to them in general and in the context of their specific school. Teachers also learn to identify the barriers to and facilitators of change in their educational organizations and to deal with conflicts and difficult situations caused by collisions of various actors' contradictory interests (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

Development in influencing strategies (IS) involves teachers coming to recognize that effective change is not achieved by leaning on one expert leader but by doing things together as a group and community. IS development includes teachers learning skills that enable collective action, such as group facilitation skills, listening skills, and skills for dealing with differences. Teachers develop all three skill sets to prepare for the fourth component: planning for action (PfA), that is, leading and taking effective action to engender change in their schools (cf. also Fullan, 2020; Harris & Lambert, 2003). The PfA component includes recognizing necessary changes; gathering, testing, and researching related data; and setting goals and planning strategies to achieve the changes in their school. The PfA component focuses more on applying teacher leadership skills in practice than introducing another skill set. Simultaneously, competence in applying teacher leadership skills in practice is an important teacher leadership skill (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009).

In the LDT model, teacher leadership development is presented as a rather linear process: teachers start by coming to understand themselves better and proceed to understand the broader picture, including their colleagues and organizations. However, it is important to note, as Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) do, that teacher leadership development is not as linear in real life as it is presented in the model.

# Collaboration as a Means of Supporting Leadership Skills Development

In the LDT model, teacher leadership skills development occurs in and through a collaborative process between teachers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). This kind of collaboration often takes place in the professional learning community (PLC) of a school (Antinluoma et al., 2018; Jäppinen et al., 2016) and, thus, typically occurs in the in-service setting. However, the development described in the LDT model can also take place in the pre-service setting if student teachers are provided

with opportunities to collaborate and to be members of a learning community that functions as a "pre-" PLC. We regard the TL study group as this kind of pre-PLC because its form and nature emphasize continuous professional development through collaboration between student teachers who are also peers (cf. Antinluoma et al., 2018; Jäppinen et al., 2016).

Roschelle and Teasley (1995, p. 70; see also Baker, 2015) offered a broadly accepted definition of collaboration as "a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem." We propose that an intrinsic part of the process of collaborating is collaborative interaction, which we understand as a joint interaction between individual participants in which they aim to construct a shared understanding of a phenomenon. This process also includes the concrete actions necessary for building joint interaction, such as listening to others and expressing one's views and opinions. Additionally, we suggest that in a collaborative process, participants not only aim to construct a shared understanding of a phenomenon but concurrently develop their individual perspectives and skills by continuously comparing their views and actions with those of others. Thus, learning and development through collaboration can be seen as drawing on social constructivism and sociocultural theory (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Methods**

## Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study was to gain insights into the student teachers' perceptions of their skills development in the TL study group. The research questions were as follows:

- 1. What kinds of perceptions did the student teachers have of their LDT skills development in the TL study group?
- 2. What kinds of perceptions did the student teachers have of the role of collaboration in supporting their LDT skills development in the TL study group?
- 3. Which aspects of their LDT skills development did the student teachers themselves perceive as contributing to their leadership skills development?

# The Context, Participants, and Procedure

The participants in this research engaged in a TL study group intervention conducted within a Finnish class teacher education program. In Finland, class teacher education programs are master's degree (300 ECTS) programs offered by universities (Government of Finland, 1998; Krokfors et al., 2011; Saloviita, 2019). It is worth noting that Finnish teacher education naturally supports student teachers' leadership development by preparing them to work autonomously (Lapinoja & Heikkinen, 2010) and reflectively (Toom et al., 2010) in their profession, as well as by developing their capacity to collaborate with their colleagues and superiors (Toom & Husu, 2016).

The unique feature of the teacher education program examined in this study is that the student teachers studied in groups. In this paper, the term "study group" refers to a group of first-year student teachers (also referred to as students) jointly completing their core studies in the educational sciences (25 ECTS). These core studies aim to enhance students' competence in understanding (1) the phenomenon of learning, (2) the relationship between education and society, (3) a scientific way of thinking, (4) collaboration and social interaction, and (5) the nature and development of expertise. These five themes are studied via lectures that are common to the whole cohort studying in the teacher education program and are analyzed more deeply in study groups in which the themes are, additionally, approached through the special lens of a given study group—for example, the theme of leadership in the TL study group. Thus, studying in these study groups is a phenomenon-based practice (e.g., Tarnanen & Kostiainen, 2020). The teacher education program includes several study groups, each of which focuses on a specific educational phenomenon. The students study in these groups during the first year of their education.

The study groups are facilitated by university instructors, and the studying is collaboration-based, meaning that teamwork is emphasized and the students are equal members of the groups, working together to achieve shared goals and construct a shared understanding (see also Baker, 2015). The phenomenon-based approach supports flexibility in study methods because the teacher educators and students decide collaboratively on, first, the specific phenomena that are focused on in a given study group (within the special theme, e.g., leadership) and, second, the most suitable methods for studying the given phenomena.

The study groups have regular meetings once a week. The length of one meeting is 1 hr and 30 min. In the TL study group, studying is highly collaboration-based and highlights the students' reflections, experiences, and views. Typical exercises in the TL study group consist of shared discussions among the whole group and tasks pursued in small groups, such as writing reflective group essays. Additionally, the TL students who participated in this research were provided with opportunities to visit and interview an educational leader in their authentic leadership context and to attend an international conference at which the participants included professionals and leaders in the field of education in Europe. The study group's work does not directly include the teaching practice during the first year of their studies. However, the special theme of the specific study group is used as the paradigm for observing and reflecting on what is seen and experienced during the teaching practice.

The present study was part of the DAWN project (2018–2022), which was approved by the data protection officer of their university (April 2019). The project was designed to examine the current state of and need for leadership, as well as its development, in Finland's educational organizations. The sample for this study consisted of 15 student teachers (men: n=6; women: n=9) studying in the TL study group. The sample was highly representative because all the TL students participated, except one. The ages of the participants varied between 19 and 29 years. The participants were interviewed in small groups at the end of their first year of study (May 2020). They signed consent forms for the broader research project at the beginning of their studies (October 2019)

and were asked for oral consent before participating in the present study. They were informed of their right to terminate their participation at any point during the study.

## **Data Collection**

The data for the present study were collected via semi-structured focus group interviews based on open-ended interview questions (e.g., Patton, 2015; S. Tracy, 2013). The purpose of the focus group interview method is to gain insights into the participants' perceptions, experiences, and views of a given phenomenon (Marková et al., 2007; Patton, 2015). By focus group interviews, we mean, in this study, interviews conducted in small groups in which the invitation to participate was purposefully limited to the TL group members (cf. Patton, 2015). We chose the focus group interview as the method of data collection because it can help create a casual atmosphere and interactive space in the interviews, which may, in turn, enable richer data to be gained compared to individual interviews (Patton, 2015). Creating a casual atmosphere is especially important when the participants and interviewer are not previously familiar with each other, which was the case in this study. Moreover, the focus group interview is particularly well adapted to gaining an understanding of the participants' perceptions of a phenomenon of which they have a shared experience (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004; Patton, 2015).

We conducted four recorded focus group interviews in which the students participated in groups of three to four members. The lengths of the interviews varied from 38 to 66 min. The interviews were transcribed literally. The total length of the transcribed text was 59 pages. The specific focus group interview procedure applied in this research was designed by our research team. The interviews began with five interview questions related to the students' backgrounds, such as their previous degrees and reasons for applying to study in the TL study group. The students responded to these questions individually in an order decided by the interviewer. The interviews continued with nine questions focusing on the students' perceptions of the study group and their related development. In this phase, the interview was conducted through conversation, and the participants answered the questions in any order they wanted. In the data collection phase, the students were asked about their development in general and not specifically about their leadership development. This was because the researchers assumed that mentioning the latter concept could result in the students excluding relevant content due to not necessarily perceiving it as related to leadership development.

# Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative, problem-driven content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013), drawing on both deductive and inductive reasoning (Patton, 2015). Problem-driven content analysis means that the analysis begins by establishing the research questions to be answered (Krippendorff, 2013). Open coding (inductive reasoning) was used at the beginning of both types of analysis (deductive and inductive) to remain open to the data and initially identify relevant content, keywords, and

themes in light of the research questions (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorff, 2013; Patton, 2015). After the open coding, the researchers examined the literature to determine the extent to which the present study's data supported existing theories, conceptualizations, and models (Patton, 2015). Consequently, the LDT model, introduced by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), was chosen to guide the theory-driven analysis. Quantification of the qualitative data was used to count the number of interview groups that mentioned a certain theme (see Grbich, 2013; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The analysis was conducted as follows:

- 1. The first author transcribed the interview data and read the transcriptions several times. Initial notes were made, and headings and keywords concerning the relevant content of answers to the research questions were written in the margins of the transcriptions (Krippendorff, 2013; Patton, 2015).
- 2. The students' perceptions of their teacher leadership (LDT) skills development in the TL study group (research question 1) were chosen as the first units of analysis. The interview transcriptions were read again, and the students' perceptions of their skill development were identified in the transcriptions. Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) LDT model guided the analysis (see Patton, 2015). Teacher leadership skills development was identified in the following order: development related to (1) PA, (2) IS, (3) CS, and (4) PfA components.
- 3. The students' perceptions of the role of collaboration in supporting their LDT skills development (identified in Phase 2) were examined (research question 2). The transcriptions were read again to identify the related content. Here, data-driven content analysis was applied (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Patton, 2015).
- 4. This phase included an examination of which aspects of the development of their LDT skills the students themselves perceived as fostering leadership skills development (research question 3). The transcriptions were read again to identify the related content, that is, the skills development that the students themselves linked to growth in leadership skills. Data-driven content analysis was used here as well (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Patton, 2015).

The report includes direct student quotations to increase the credibility of the study and enable the reader to evaluate the researchers' interpretations (Patton, 2015; S. J. Tracy, 2010). The quotations have been pseudonymized to protect the participants' privacy.

#### **Results**

## LDT Skills Development and the Related Role of Collaboration

First, we were interested in the students' perceptions of their teacher leadership (LDT) skills development in the TL study group (research question 1). Second, we wanted to examine the students' perceptions of the role of collaboration in supporting their LDT

skills development (research question 2). We discuss the results of these two research questions together in this section because they are closely related.

Consistent with the PA component of the LDT model, students in all four interview groups reported that they had come to recognize differences between themselves and their peers. However, the students approached these differences as a resource and strength: "At least I feel that we have congenial people here, but every one of us is an individual, and we contribute to the group by bringing something our own and special to it" (Anni, Group 4). Another student highlighted the "rather strong personalities, differing significantly but complementing one another well" (Tommi, Group 3).

Related to the PA skills development, students in three interview groups also reported development in better understanding their own beliefs, views, and strengths. The students said that they had become more aware of their own beliefs and views and, additionally, reflected on, questioned, and developed them based on hearing others' opinions and views. As one student, Essi (Group 1), stated, ". . . I have gained many new perspectives and found new ways of thinking and seeing matters, and I have, through that, learned a lot." Another student, Tommi (Group 3), reported, ". . . I gained, about certain things which I have, perhaps, even had a strict opinion, lots of new perspectives because of hearing from the others what they think about matters." Recognizing one's strengths was associated with recognizing challenges to one's development. This motivated the development of one's skills and competencies:

I think I have always had the kind of challenge that I have not been confident enough to open my mouth. I mean, I haven't had strong confidence that I really can and do know something about an issue. I feel that I have gained lots of courage, especially in the TL study group. It has been an important learning experience for me to become more confident in stating my opinions out loud and arguing for them. (Emma, Group 1)

Gaining experience in and seeing others acting in various roles in a group was mentioned in two interview groups: "The groups varied. I mean, they were composed of various people, so everyone had a bit of a different role every time, and it is, at least, always useful to have different experiences with various groups" (Satu, Group 3). Gaining experience in acting in various roles in a group can be identified as part of PA skills development because it is about constructing an initial understanding of oneself as a professional who has multiple dimensions and roles. Additionally, it is about coming to better understand the diverse roles of one's peers, which is also important preparation for facing the multiple roles of colleagues in one's future school community.

According to students in all the interview groups, the role of collaboration in supporting their PA skills development was central because in the collaborative process, they heard their peers' opinions and views, compared their own views with those of others, and came to notice the differences in views and strengths between themselves and the others. In the following quotation, one student describes her perception of how the shared discussions in the TL group supported her PA skills development, mentioning the ". . . discussions as something that has been very useful to me—having an opportunity to hear others' views" (Satu, Group 3). Moreover, working in small groups

to gain experience assuming various roles in a group was part of the collaborative process in the TL group.

Related to the perception of the group members possessing various strengths and expertise, students in all interview groups reported that their understanding of the power of a group and of collaboration in achieving common goals had deepened. This is related to skills development in IS. The students said, ". . . also, as a group, when we start doing things, we really achieve good things" (Tuomas, Group 2); and ". . . perhaps when one hears another's opinions and solutions to some issues, then it results in one suddenly starting to think, '. . . Why didn't I think like this?" (Emma, Group 1).

The students also reported development in the other IS skills: listening, group facilitation, and dealing with differences. Students in three interview groups mentioned that their listening and communication skills had improved in the TL study group. According to them, applying these skills in practice in the collaborative interactions of the TL study group supported the development of these skills. The students said that they had learned more about what it meant to genuinely listen to one another. Related to this, the students reported that in the TL study group, they had sincerely tried to understand their peers' views, opinions, and intentions. They described developing their skills and attitudes in respectful and considerate interactions with others: "I believe I have become a much better conversationalist. I have learned to genuinely listen to what others have to say, and you yourself gain more ideas through listening to others" (Minna, Group 2); and ". . . that has even been surprising, how natural and good our conversations have usually been. And, especially, we give one another space; we prioritize taking everyone into account in those situations" (Jimi, Group 1).

Students in two interview groups mentioned that through participation in various activities based on collaborative interactions in the TL study group, they had started to recognize tools and activities that were effective for facilitating a group. As an example of this kind of activity, they mentioned a circle discussion exercise that had been enacted in the TL group. The circle discussion exercise usually took place at the beginning of the TL group's regular meetings. In the circle discussions, the students' current thoughts and moods in relation to their studies and daily lives were voluntarily shared. The following quotation presents a student's perception of the circle discussion exercise:

. . . I think that we have pretty often had the kind of circle discussions to catch up . . . It is quite nice . . . to hear how it is going with the others and then talk a bit about one's own concerns . . . It creates a sense of community, in my opinion, and, especially in future workplaces. . . that kind of stuff is a very good tool for creating an atmosphere. (Tuomas, Group 2)

The students in one interview group reported (in relation to IS skills development) that they had developed their skills in dealing with diverse views and opinions that may have differed rather starkly from their own. As one student recounted, ". . . then there is a very different opinion from another side compared to my opinion. But then,

somehow, when they are being argued for, it is possible to better understand how others think" (Emma, Group 1).

Students in another interview group mentioned that they had become more aware of the role of values in teacher leadership: "Values of a leader . . . we have dealt a lot with the values, and . . . they are now clear. It is about recognizing what type of leader is a good leader . . ." (Iina, Group 3). Becoming more aware of the importance of values in a leader's work and, especially, starting to recognize one's own values as a leader is part of building one's own understanding of teacher leadership, which is a competence related to the CS component. The students did not mention collaboration in connection with their progress toward becoming more aware of a leader's values.

Additionally, students in one interview group said that they had become more aware of various leadership contexts in the field of education. This can be seen as an initial development of CS skills because the ability to recognize diverse leadership contexts is important for being able to understand one's own leadership context, with its special features and demands. The students mentioned that this skill development had been supported by the exercises of interviewing an educational leader and participating in the international conference:

. . . I'd like to say about the same [exercise of interviewing an educational leader] that [I learned that] there exist various kinds of leadership, and that leadership exists in various contexts . . . and it may vary even within a specific context. (Anni, Group 4)

In relation to their progress in recognizing various leadership contexts, the students did not mention the role of collaboration. However, they mentioned that the opportunity to visit an authentic leadership context and speak with a "real-life" educational leader supported their capacity to recognize different contexts. The students did not report skill development in relation to the PfA component.

# Perceiving LDT Skills Development as Leadership Development

Third, we were interested in which aspects of their LDT skills development the students themselves perceived as enhancing leadership skills (research question 3). In one interview group, the students reported on leadership skills development in relation to their progress in building teamwork skills: ". . . In a principal's work, you need strong teamwork skills. I think it is great that we develop these skills here, and you don't need to try to solve matters on your own . . ." (Minna, Group 2). In this interview group, the students described teamwork skills as communication skills (included in IS) that imply the ability to develop one's own thinking further based on hearing others' views (included in PA). In the same interview group, the students mentioned, as part of leadership development, their recognition of activities that were effective for facilitating a group (included in IS).

In another interview group, students discussed leadership skills development in relation to becoming more aware of the role of values in teacher leadership and, along the same lines, of one's own values as a leader (identified as initial CS development in

research question 1). In one interview group, students discussed leadership skills development in relation to having developed their competence in recognizing various leadership contexts in the field of education (identified as initial CS development in research question 1): ". . . I noticed that this [leadership] stuff can be well applied here, in this context" (Kalle, Group 4). The students did not link leadership skills development to their other LDT skills development. In general, the students in all interview groups reported that their (practical) leadership development had been rather limited in the TL study group: ". . . I don't think . . . that I significantly developed my leadership competence . . . through the exercises in the TL study group . . ." (Satu, Group 3). The students mentioned the limited number of practical leadership exercises as a central factor that hindered their leadership development in the TL studies to some extent.

## **Discussion**

The aim of the present study was to examine first-year student teachers' perceptions of their leadership development in a study group intervention concerned with teacher leadership and conducted as part of a Finnish teacher education program. First, we wanted to examine the students' perceptions of their teacher leadership (LDT) skills development in the study group (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). The results indicate that the students, by their own accounts, developed their skills in several ways, primarily in two skill sets from the LDT model: PA and IS, that is, understanding themselves and their colleagues or peers (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; see also York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Additionally, they reported very preliminary development in the CS skill set, that is, understanding the (school) context in which they lead. The skills the students reported having gained prepared them to work and lead in a collaborative way in their future PLCs (e.g., Antinluoma et al., 2018; Jäppinen et al., 2016).

This study indicates that Katzenmeyer and Moller's (2009) LDT model is suitable for examining teacher leadership development in the (Finnish) pre-service teacher education setting with regard to the model's PA and IS components but is not particularly helpful in illuminating the CS and PfA components, which are more closely connected to the job-embedded setting of in-service teachers. The advantage of the model is that it enables the identification of those skills that are often labeled as "just" interaction or collaboration skills as leadership skills (cf. Ado, 2016; Tynjälä et al., 2016).

Additionally, the LDT paradigm enabled initial CS skills development to be identified among the participants. This was, to some extent, surprising in a non-job-embedded setting and thus supports the use of the LDT model as a paradigm capable of identifying nuances of leadership skills development in the pre-service setting as well (cf. Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). However, it would be worth exploring whether the LDT model could be developed further so that it could be applied in various career stages and teacher contexts even more effectively, including the pre-service setting.

Correspondingly, the model could be referenced in designing support for teacher leadership in the initial teacher education setting. In this design process, it would be

important to ponder what the model's four components mean in the pre-service context and how the development process presented in the model could be implemented in practice in that setting.

Second, we wanted to examine the students' perceptions of how collaborative interaction supported their LDT skills development in the study group. According to them, collaboration (see Baker, 2015; Roschelle & Teasley, 1995) played an important role in supporting their LDT skills development by providing them with a continuous interactive space in which they shared their views and contrasted them with those of others as well as using and developing their interaction skills, such as attentive listening. Because the TL study group functioned as a learning community in which professional development through collaboration between peers was emphasized, it contained features of a pre-PLC (cf. Harris & Lambert, 2003; Jäppinen et al., 2016).

Third, we were interested in which aspects of their LDT skills development the students themselves perceived as contributions to leadership skills development. Here, the students mentioned mainly the types of progress in LDT skills that seemed to have been directly framed as leadership development in the TL study group. They did not recognize the other LDT skills developed as developments in leadership competency (cf. Ball & Forzani, 2009; Bond, 2011) and, thus, considered their leadership skills development as being rather limited in the TL study group. According to the students, the main factor that hindered the development of their leadership skills in the study group was the limited number of practical leadership exercises (cf. Ball & Forzani, 2009; Xu & Patmor, 2012).

In the future, it would be important to support such students in recognizing the skills they attained as "real" teacher leadership skills (cf. Bond, 2011). It seemed that the TL study group elements the students found most beneficial for their leadership skills development were the activities and exercises generally used in the study group and were not specifically related to the "leadership content" (cf. Xu & Patmor, 2012). This may have made it challenging for the students to recognize their development as leadership development. Supporting such students in recognizing the kinds of leadership skills they learn and the situations in which they learned them, together with arguing why these skills are important for teacher leaders, could further motivate the students to study (cf. Yuan & Zhang, 2017). Similarly, the students could be supported in recognizing their leadership skills development by introducing and utilizing the TL study group more explicitly as the students' current leadership context—a pre-PLC in which they take action as leaders and form part of a specific leadership culture (cf. Jäppinen et al., 2016; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) in their daily studies. What they learn about leadership through that experience could help them better understand and embody leadership in their future PLCs.

Additionally, practical leadership exercises, such as those focused on leading peers or children, could be included in initial teacher education to a greater extent. However, previous research highlights a busy curriculum with diverse learning contents as an obstacle to adding new subject matter to teacher education (Bond, 2011; Xu & Patmor, 2012). Thus, practical leadership exercises might be added to teacher education study

programs by integrating them into existing elements, such as teaching practices. Alternatively, it would be important to clarify the nature of teachers' leadership role to the students and to help them become more aware of their beliefs about leadership in teachers' work (cf. Xu & Patmor, 2012; see also Harris & Muijs, 2005)—that is, to invite them to challenge their—possibly somewhat stereotypical—views of teachers' leadership role as solely something that an individual assumes in relation to their "followers."

The TL study group examined in the present research was held only during the first year of the students' studies. In the future, it would be worth developing the concept so that the students could continue their participation in the TL study group, even in the later stages of their studies. This would facilitate coordinated support for their leadership skills development over a longer period. Continuity is important in supporting professional development that includes, in the case of leadership, building and transforming one's beliefs and understanding of leadership (cf., e.g., Harris & Muijs, 2005; Xu & Patmor, 2012), which are usually long-term processes.

## **Limitations**

Both the methodology and the findings of this research have some limitations. The sample was rather small, albeit representative and sufficiently rich for qualitative research, which results in limitations on the generalization of the findings beyond the given group of participants (Patton, 2015). In focus group interviews, participants may feel pressured to provide socially desirable answers, and they may have limited time and space to answer (Patton, 2015; Stewart et al., 2007). Through qualitative interviews, it is possible to study the subjective perceptions of participants but not to measure the phenomenon in focus, that is, leadership development, externally or "objectively" (see DeRoche & DeRoche, 2010). The limitation of deductive reasoning is that the lens of the theory guides the analysis, which may result in missing findings that could have been discovered with another analysis method or guiding theory (cf. Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

# **Conclusions and Practical Implications**

The present study indicates that it is possible and beneficial to start supporting teachers' leadership development from the beginning of their initial teacher education studies (cf. Ado, 2016; Bond, 2011). According to this research, collaboration-based studying that uses a (pre-professional) learning community as a resource (cf. Harris & Lambert, 2003; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009) can be an effective way to support preservice teachers' development of skills that are important for teacher leaders. Utilizing pre-PLCs consisting of student teachers who are also peers could offer one way to bring work life-related elements closer to the teacher education context and, thus, tackle the challenge identified by scholars—that is, more closely integrating the preservice phase with elements from school organization and the authentic work lives of teachers (e.g., Ball & Forzani, 2009; Rutten et al., 2022). However, special attention

should be paid to supporting student teachers in recognizing their progress toward and achievement of leadership skills development (cf. Ball & Forzani, 2009; Bond, 2011). In the future, it would be interesting to study how the TL study group students' leadership skills, as well as their awareness of those skills, developed in the later stages of their teacher education studies. It would also be interesting to study how these student teachers applied their acquired leadership skills in their future PLCs, especially in the induction phase.

This study provides an innovative and encouraging example of how support for teacher leadership development can be integrated into initial teacher education. However, further research and development work within the teacher education setting is needed to identify methods of preparing pre-service teachers to lead in their future school organizations and not just among their peers. This could, perhaps, help prevent teacher burnout in the induction phase (cf. Elomaa et al., 2022; Rokala et al., 2022) and encourage student teachers to continue their leadership studies after the transition to working life, as well as to assume leadership roles in their school contexts (cf. Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016). Concurrently, it is worth pondering what the aim of leadership development is in the pre-service setting: to prepare expert teacher leaders, or to function as a catalyst for the process in which student teachers become more aware of their own leadership potential? In addition to examining a particular study group concerned with teacher leadership, this study offers insights into phenomenon- and group-based studying within teacher education. It is worth considering whether study groups that approach educational phenomena through special lenses could be applied more extensively in teacher education (see also Connolly, 2008; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). This could help develop both the multifaceted and specific professional and leadership competencies of teachers, which are required for schools' effectiveness and improvement.

#### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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# II

# STUDENT TEACHERS' LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN A FINNISH CLASS TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

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# Student Teachers' Leadership Development in A Finnish Class Teacher Education Program

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#### **Abstract**

This case study examined student teachers' (n = 5) leadership development in a Finnish class teacher education program. The study focused on identifying the student teachers' individual approaches to leadership development and examining how they developed their leadership during teacher education, including their reflections on the achieved leadership development. The data were collected with motivation letters written by the student teachers and semistructured individual interviews. The analysis methods comprised qualitative content analysis with inductive reasoning and typologization. The results revealed student teacher types representing three different approaches to leadership development: competence-, personality-, and context-driven. The student teachers developed their leadership during teacher education in alignment with their individual approaches and utilized the study program diversely in this process. Student teachers who presented a competence-driven approach estimated their achieved leadership development to be relatively weaker. Furthermore, pre-service teachers possess individual leadership development motivations and goals and the capability to facilitate their own professional development in alignment with these goals. This study contributes to the literature by focusing on the individual nature of leadership development in initial teacher education and by addressing this as a matter to be considered in designing how to support pre-service teachers' professional (leadership) development in the future.

**Key Words:** Teacher leadership, teacher professional development, leadership development, class teacher education, case study

#### Introduction

In their daily work, teachers are required to enact leadership in various ways and on various levels (Ash & Persall, 2000; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Besides teachers leading, for example, a group of students (e.g., Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001), they often focus on leading their colleagues and collaborating with them in the professional community of a school (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016; Muijs & Harris, 2006). Teachers' leadership may also involve decision-making (Wenner & Campbell, 2017) and administrative procedures, such as recruitment processes of new teachers (Barth, 2001). Leadership enacted by class teachers usually takes place in a primary or comprehensive school context (Sahlberg, Gardner, & Robinson, 2021). Teachers play a multifaceted

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role in school leadership, but their inadequate leadership competencies may result in a weakened capacity to effectively contribute to the key areas of providing holistic support for student learning, such as shared pedagogical planning, classroom management, and home—school collaboration (cf. Leithwood, Sun, & Schumacker, 2020). High leadership competencies, in contrast, can help teachers successfully manage their daily work, which may result in decreased levels of teacher stress, burnout, and career turnover (e.g., Rokala, Pakarinen, Eskelä-Haapanen, & Lerkkanen, 2022).

Development toward the multifaceted leadership enacted by teachers is a continuous process of professional development (Desimone, 2009; Metsäpelto et al., 2020). Although this development process starts in the shared context and social community of a teacher education program (Bond, 2011; Forster, 1997), the nature of a student teacher's leadership development is concurrently individual (cf. Krzywacki, 2009; Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, Paloniemi, Herranen, & Eteläpelto, 2017). Individual factors, such as professional development needs (Craft, 2000; Morgan & Neil, 2003), prior knowledge, and experience, as well as personal interests (Joint Task Force, 1998; Owen, 2011, pp. 112–113) and motivation (Krzywacki, 2009) influence a teacher's professional (Craft, 2000; Morgan & Neil, 2003) and leadership (Wagner, 2011) development process. Having an opportunity to set individual goals for one's leadership and other professional development is accompanied by a higher probability of using intrinsic motivation as the driving force for development (cf. Haase, Heckhausen, & Köller, 2008; Sheldon & Elliot, 1998). To this end, intrinsic motivation has been indicated as support for deep and effective learning and development (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008).

The significance of the individual nature of leadership development is recognized in the research literature on in-service teachers' leadership development (see e.g., Morgan & Neil, 2003; Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017; Smylie & Eckert, 2018). However, research focusing on individual leadership development among student teachers is rather limited, although there is previous research on student teachers' individual factors and development concerning other areas of professional development, such as forming a teacher identity (Krzywacki, 2009) and professional vision (Stürmer, Seidel, & Holzberger, 2016). Further, studies on leadership development in the initial teacher education phase in general, particularly outside the Anglo-Saxon setting, are scant (cf. Ado, 2016; Leonard, Petta, & Porter, 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Research on student teachers' leadership development is needed to design and develop research-based support for it, which is also a development challenge addressed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). The present study examines the kinds of individual approaches used by Finnish student teachers in developing their leadership and how they develop their leadership during class teacher education, including their reflections of achieved leadership development as well as factors that support or prevent this development. We perceive our research as a case study because it aims to holistically examine the five student teacher cases (cf. Patton,

2015) from the perspective of their individual teacher leadership development.

# Theoretical Framework Student teachers' leadership development

The professional development of teachers is a complex process (Desimone, 2009; Metsäpelto et al., 2020) that covers both the activities for development (Guskey, 2003) toward improved professional practice and the achieved improvement (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). The process and activities may include both formal learning, such as structured learning opportunities and processes within a formal study program (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2011), and informal learning, such as learning through work (Fuller & Unwin, 2002; Tynjälä, 2013). Professional development as a teacher in general and as a teacher leader are strongly related and overlapping processes in the case of student teachers during initial teacher education (cf. Bond, 2011). Student teachers play an important role in their own leadership development (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009) by facilitating and leading their own learning by, for instance, actively utilizing and reflecting on various experiences and learning opportunities (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, & Paloniemi, 2014; Wagner, 2011).

Leadership development involves various kinds of development, including gaining theoretical and other formal knowledge of leadership, as well as practicing the skills and competences needed by a leader (Seemiller, 2013; Sessa, 2017). Student teachers' leadership development also includes the process of holistic personal development and inquiry (cf. Lanas & Kelchtermans, 2015; Sessa, 2017; Tomlinson, 2004). This personal development involves the development of one's leadership identity, which includes how one sees and understands oneself as a leader (Sessa, 2017; Wagner, 2011). Related to that, holistic personal development includes the development of self-knowledge and self-efficacy—that is, one's beliefs about whether one is able to act successfully and effectively as a leader (Wagner, 2011; see also Bandura, 1997)—as well as the examination and development of one's values and beliefs as a leader (Sessa, 2017; Tomlinson, 2004). Generally, student teachers develop their leadership for a particular leadership context (see, McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010; cf. also Smylie & Eckert, 2018). In the case of this study, this context refers to class teachers' work in a primary school context (cf. York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

## Teacher education as a leadership development environment

A formal study program can serve as a learning and development environment for leadership by providing various kinds of challenges and learning opportunities that support student teachers' leadership development (Owen, 2011; Sessa, 2017). Some of these opportunities are more formal, such as a lecture in a classroom, and others are more informal, such as having a casual conversation with a university teacher (Joint

Task Force, 1998; Keeling, 2004; Owen, 2011, pp. 112–114). Other examples of the activities supporting leadership development in a study program are opportunities for applying one's skills in a new context, observing role models, gathering together with other developing leaders to learn from each other, identifying one's own strengths by observing the strengths of others, and receiving personal mentoring (Wagner, 2011, p. 93).

In Finland, class teacher education is a master's level education (300 ECTS) conducted by universities, which takes approximately five years to complete (Government of Finland, 1998; Silander & Välijärvi, 2013). The students complete, first, a bachelor's degree (180 ECTS) and, second, a master's degree (120 ECTS). The central curricular elements of Finnish teacher education include theoretical studies in educational sciences, multidisciplinary studies in subjects taught in basic education, teaching practices, and other studies, such as various optional studies (Silander & Välijärvi, 2013). Finnish teacher education aims at increasing student teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge base in teaching and learning, as well as supporting their holistic personal development (Metsäpelto et al., 2021; Väisänen, 2005; cf. also Sessa, 2017). In this way, Finnish teacher education naturally helps student teachers develop as teacher leaders by aiming at increasing their self-knowledge, competency in classroom management, theoretical knowledge base in the matters that teachers face in their future work (leadership) contexts, and value base concerning, for example, an understanding of every student as an equally valued learner.

## Methodology

## The aim of the present study

This study examines the kinds of approaches to leadership development employed by student teachers and how they develop their leadership during teacher education. This investigation includes both leadership development during the first two years of the studies and the student teachers' plans for developing their leadership during the rest of their studies. This study also assesses the student teachers' reflections of their achieved leadership development, and the factors that support or prevent this development. The research questions are as follows:

- 1. What kinds of approaches did the student teachers employ in their leadership development?
- 2. How did the student teachers pursue achieving leadership development during teacher education?
- 3. What are the reflections of the student teachers regarding their achieved leadership development and the related supportive and preventive factors?

## Context, participants, and procedure

This study was conducted as part of the DAWN project (2018–2022), the aim of

which was to examine the current state of leadership and the need for its development in educational organizations in Finland. The sample of the present study consisted of five third-year student teachers (also referred to as *students*) studying in one Finnish class teacher education program. It was particular for this study program that the students studied in various study groups within the broader program. In these study groups, the students studied the core studies in educational sciences (25 ECTS) and simultaneously focused on a specific educational theme of a given study group. Students study in the study groups most intensively during the first year of the teacher education studies. The participants of this research were students in a study group that aimed to enhance their leadership development. The aim of this study group was to enhance the students' knowledge base and competence in teacher leadership, especially in leading oneself, including leading one's own professional development and understanding one's own values as a teacher leader. In this paper, this study group is referred to by the pseudonym TL study group (teacher leadership study group).

Research ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process. The DAWN project was approved by the Data Protection Officer of the University in April 2019. The participants in this sub-study were informed that their participation was voluntary, and that they could cancel their participation at any point in the research. They signed written consent for the wider research project when starting their teacher education studies (October 2019) and were informed in detail of the present sub-study before being additionally asked for oral consent (May 2020) to participate. The five student participants were chosen from among the broader pool of TL study group students based on their voluntary acceptance of the call to participate in the individual interview, which was an additional data collection method within the broader study.

Along with the present sub-study, we conducted another sub-study that focused on examining how the TL study group alone supported students' leadership development (see Alho, Hanhimäki, & Eskelä-Haapanen, 2023). Because the TL study group and the broader teacher education program are closely integrated and aim to support each other, in this study, we wanted to examine TL students' leadership development in their broader study context, the whole teacher education program, to expand our knowledge of their holistic leadership development during their studies.

#### **Data collection**

The data of this research consisted of the motivation letters written by the participants at the beginning of their studies as part of their application procedure to the TL study group (September 2019) and the semi-structured individual interviews (see Galletta & Cross, 2013) of the participants at the beginning of the third year of their studies (September 2021). The data collection was scheduled this way because the aim of our study was to gain insights into the students' (reflections of their) leadership development from the beginning of and during their studies (versus, e.g., solely in their

graduation phase). The reason for this aim was that examining the students' real-time reflections might best help understand their approaches to leadership development and, thus, design timely support at the various phases of their studies. The beginning of the third year of studies was, additionally, estimated as a suitable point for the second phase of the data collection because, from that point on, the students' studies begin to become more individualized, possibly resulting in the students starting to reflect on their individual leadership development more actively.

In the motivation letters, the students described and argued for their motivation to study in the TL study group. The length of the motivation letters varied between 2 and 10 phrases per letter. The individual interviews consisted of six open-ended questions. The interviews were started by showing a student his or her motivation letter. After that, the interviewer started the actual interview by asking a student to discuss the thoughts inspired by the letter. Other interview questions focused on the students' perceptions of their leadership development during the first two years in teacher education, their plans for developing their leadership during the rest of their studies, and their dreams and goals as future teacher leaders. The length of the individual interviews varied from 14 to 32 minutes. The interviews were transcribed literally. The original language of both the motivation letters and the interviews was Finnish. The researchers chose the data extracts to be included in this report and translated them into English.

## Data analysis

The analysis methods used in the present study consisted of qualitative problem-driven content analysis with inductive reasoning (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorff, 2013) and typologization (Patton, 2015). The analysis was conducted in the following phases:

- 1. The first author conducted close readings of the students' motivation letters and applied problem-driven content analysis to identify the students' leadership development approaches at the beginning of their studies.
- 2. The first author transcribed the interviews and read the transcriptions several times (cf. Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Problem-driven content analysis was used to examine whether the content of the interview data supported the interpretations made in Phase 1 regarding the students' leadership development approaches (cf. Patton, 2015). The aim was also to identify the students' leadership development approaches at the beginning of the third year of their studies and to examine whether the approaches remained the same compared to the beginning of their studies.
- 3. Based on the findings in Phases 1 and 2, student types representing various leadership development approaches were generated (see Patton, 2015). Typologization enabled identifying the individual approaches of the students and approaching the data entity with this lens (cf. Hänninen, 1999).

Previous theory was utilized to label the types built through an inductive analysis process (cf. Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2013). The process of generating the student types is presented in Table 1. The analysis conducted in Phases 1–3 produced results for the first research question by revealing three student types representing various leadership development approaches.

**Table 1.** *The Typologization of the Students (A–E) Based on Their Leadership Development Approaches* 

Example units describing the students' leadership development goals	Approach to leadership development
I want to develop my leadership competence (A) A teacher must be able to lead a group well (A)that industrial peace is maintained (A)facilitate a group by creating a safe atmosphere and being efficient (B)	Competence-driven
I hope to learn to know myself better (C)strengthen my view of the leadership position in which I want to be (C)that being in the role of a leader would become more natural to me (D)	Personality- driven
I want to learn more about what is included in teachers' leadership (E) I would like to strengthen my understanding of a teacher's leadership role (E)	Context- driven

- 4. The content analysis was continued by reading the interview transcriptions again to find answers to the second (the students' ways of developing leadership) and third (the achievement of leadership development) research questions. First, the analysis was conducted on the students' leadership development during the first two years of their studies. Second, the analysis was conducted on the students' plans for developing their leadership during the rest of their teacher education studies.
- 5. The findings regarding all the research questions were collated on separate coding sheets of each of the five participants to combine the findings from Phases 1–4 concerning each participant. This reorganization of the data was followed by the generation of individual student cases. The cases aim to describe the development of the students who portrayed the three types of leadership development approaches.

6. Based on the five student cases, compiled type descriptions (combining individual student cases) were generated insofar as there were more than one student representing a leadership development approach. These types of descriptions contain commonalities as well as unique features of the leader-ship development of students representing the given type. To identify these commonalities and unique features, cross-case analysis was applied (see Patton, 2015). All five student cases were included in the type descriptions to present the variety among the individual student teachers and to maintain the richness of the data (see Patton, 2015). The phases of the whole data analysis process are presented in Figure 1.

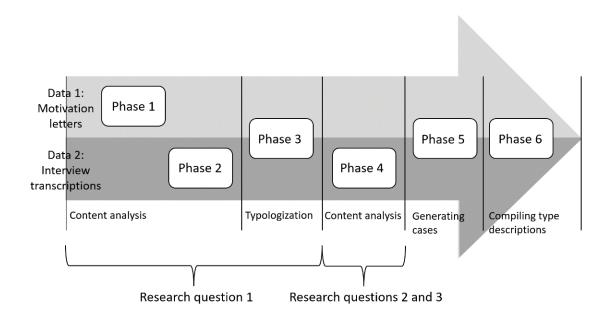


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

Direct quotations are included in this report to improve the trustworthiness of the study. The participants are referred to by codes A–E to protect their privacy. Trustworthiness (cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was, additionally, increased in the research process from the perspective of 1) credibility by data triangulation, prolonged engagement (a two-phase data collection), the involvement of several researchers in the analysis process, and the utilization of the semi-structured interview that enables checking from the interviewees; 2) transferability by taking into account the context when making interpretations and describing it in sufficient detail in the report; 3) dependability by carefully designing, conducting, and reporting the research frame, including, for example, following the same interview frame with all the participants; and 4) confirmability by going back to the raw data several times during the analysis process to keep the findings grounded in the data, as well as by ensuring that there was no significant overlap between the generated types. Throughout the research process, we pursued

maintaining a critical approach to our interpretations and possible wishes for the results (cf. reflexivity; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **Findings**

## Student teachers' leadership development approaches

Our first research question examines the kind of leadership development approaches the students represented. Three student types were identified: competence-driven, personality-driven, and context-driven approaches to leadership development. We found that the approaches remained the same during the first two years of students' teacher education studies. The competence-driven approach was represented by two of the five students (A and B). These two students mentioned that it was important to them to develop their leadership-related competences, which would help them enact their leadership more effectively in practice in the classroom and the broader school organization. Both students did not have much previous leadership experience, and they wanted to develop their competence in facilitating a student group. Student A emphasized gaining more experience in leading a group to increase the level of confidence as a leader of a group. She also wanted to develop her competence in acting as a member of a collaborative colleague group:

I want to develop my leadership competence because I have no previous experience in, for example, facilitating a hobby group. A teacher must be able to lead a group well to ensure that the children receive the teaching they deserve, and that industrial peace is maintained. I also want to develop my leadership competence in terms of acting as a group member because collaboration among teachers is becoming increasingly important. (Student A)

Student B's additional interest was in the administrative side of school leadership, including recruitment processes, and he wanted to learn more about the practicalities related to it.

The personality-driven approach to leadership development was represented by two of the five students (C and D). Whereas the students representing the competence-driven approach emphasized developing their competences in practical leadership, the students with the personality-driven approach focused on the holistic development of themselves as leaders. Student C said that she wanted to learn to know herself better as a leader and to clarify her identity as a leader: "I hope to learn to know myself better, develop my authority, and strengthen my view of the leadership position in which I want to be in the future." Student D mentioned that he wanted to develop himself as a "good leader" and to strengthen his confidence as a leader so that acting in the role of a leader would be more natural to him:

I think my goal is just to feel that I have become a better leader and to gain confidence. To feel that I am a good leader and that being in the role of a leader would become more natural to me. I want to be able to ... trust in what I am doing. I want to be kind of a safe person for my students but, at the same time, a leader. (Student D)

One of the five students (E) presented the context-driven approach to leadership development. She emphasized developing her leadership in a teacher's work and role context: "I want to learn more about what is included in teachers' leadership. I would like to strengthen my identity as a teacher and my understanding of a teacher's leadership role in the classroom and elsewhere in the school." In Student E's approach, both the development in leadership competences and holistic personal leadership development were included, but the focus was on deepening understanding of and developing one's leadership especially from the perspective of the teacher's work.

### Student teachers' leadership development during teacher education

With the second research question, we examined how the students pursued achieving leadership development during teacher education. We were interested in how students developed their leadership during the first two years of their teacher education studies and how they pursued developing their leadership during the rest of their studies. Additionally (the third research question), we were interested in the students' reflections of their achieved leadership development during the first two years of their studies, and the factors supporting and preventing this development. The contents of the second and third research questions were highly connected, for which reason they are discussed together in this subsection.

Students exhibiting a competence-driven approach emphasized the significance of practical exercises and knowledge for their leadership development. Student A said that she developed her leadership particularly through the teaching practice at the end of the first academic year, as the teaching practice had enabled her to gain more experience in leading a group:

Well, I think that I have perhaps gained experience in facilitating a group, for example, through the teaching practice we had during the first year of our studies. It was the first time for me to really experience what and how it is to lead a group in a school environment. (Student A)

The two students depicting the competence-driven approach said that their leadership competency had not developed strongly during the first two years of their studies. Student B mentioned that he would have wished to have gained more knowledge of the school's administrative matters, such as recruitment processes and the role of a viceprincipal. According to him, past teacher education and TL study group studies had not included content related to these issues. According to Student A, leadership-related themes had been present in the TL study group but approached rather superficially, for which reason she felt that the study group had not supported her leadership development substantially:

Although we had the study group related to leadership, it was conducted basically during the first year of our studies, and there the leadership theme was related to the other courses. I think it was more about scratching the surface. I see that I still have much to develop. (Student A)

During the rest of their studies, the students with a competence-driven approach planned to develop their leadership through teaching practices. In teaching practices, they wished to learn more about leading a group of children by gaining more experience in that area: "I will soon have my second teaching practice. I believe that it will be possible to develop my leadership skills in the classroom through it" (Student B). Student B also mentioned that he saw it important for his leadership development that teaching practices include opportunities to observe how the teacher responsible for mentoring the practicing student teacher acts as a mentor: "In the teaching practice, there will be a mentor teacher supporting me, so it will . . . be an opportunity to see what . . . counseling by this mentor teacher is toward me. So, it's about seeing another perspective."

Student A also hoped that there would be a master's-level course on the leader-ship theme that would support her in developing her leadership competence. Student B planned to include optional leadership-related courses conducted by another faculty in his degree plan. Student B said that he was pursuing these optional studies as a means of improving his chance to become accepted into basic studies in educational leader-ship (25 ECTS), which he planned to conduct as his minor subject in the master's studies phase. The basic studies in educational leadership include administrative perspectives on school leadership and qualify the participants for principal positions.

Students who showed a personality-driven approach said that they had pursued achieving, and simultaneously achieved, leadership development in several ways during teacher education. They stated that the TL study group played a central role in supporting their leadership development. In the study group, their knowledge base in leadership, including self-leadership, increased. In particular, the shared peer discussions had developed their views of leadership. As the students described, "We talked a lot about leadership, and everyone had a chance to share his or her own views and thoughts. It has made my own thinking richer" (Student C), and "I have received answers to what makes a person a good leader because we have talked about that a lot" (Student D).

The students employing a personality-driven approach to leadership development also mentioned that the TL study group supported them in developing their self-knowledge and self-confidence as leaders:

For example, I have been encouraged that I am suitable for a leadership position because I have learned that a leader does not need to be a certain kind, for example, very authoritarian, but that there can be all kinds of leaders. (Student C)

After being in the TL study group, I noticed that it has been easier for me to be in a leadership role in group projects. (Student D)

Student D also mentioned that he had developed his leadership through teaching practice because there had been an opportunity to observe the actions of an experienced teacher. Student C had included optional leadership-related courses from another faculty in her degree plan. She said that through them, she had gained basic knowledge and ideas on leadership. Both Student C and Student D indicated that if there had been more practical leadership exercises included in the studies, it could have helped them enhance the practical side of their leadership skills more effectively. According to them, not having sufficient practical exercises had, to some extent, prevented or, at the least, slowed down their achievement of practical leadership development.

During the rest of the class teacher education studies, Student C planned to develop her leadership skills by continuing her optional leadership studies. She also planned to learn more about leadership by including leadership-related themes in her bachelor's and master's theses. Student D, too, planned to utilize the thesis processes in developing his leadership skills but particularly with the aim of developing himself as the leader of himself through being responsible for conducting his own work in the thesis processes. Additionally, Student D planned to develop his leadership skills through future teaching practices and by acting in a leadership position in the future group projects included in the rest of his studies.

Student E, who represented the context-driven approach to leadership development, utilized the teacher education studies particularly to increase her understanding of what leadership is in a teacher's work and role. Student E said that the studies had supported her leadership development as an entity, and she did not perceive any single element to stand out from the entity regarding its significance for her leadership development. However, she mentioned that teaching practices and content knowledge on educational sciences and pedagogy had helped her develop her understanding, knowledge base, and expertise in leadership as part of a teacher's work: "For example, how to give special support or how to deal with difficult situations or these kinds of concrete things, and then also studying pedagogy-related theories, have supported my leadership development."

What was special in Student E's case was that she had completed previous leadership training in another field before her teacher education studies. In her teacher education studies, she actively utilized and reflected on her previous knowledge and experiences in leadership, applying and modifying it for a teacher's work. She pursued increasing her understanding of differences in teacher's leadership compared to leadership in other contexts: "I have learned to modify my previous expertise and experience in leading a group to the kind of leadership that a teacher can utilize." In general, Student E reported having achieved leadership development during her teacher education studies. Similar to the other four students, Student E mentioned that the practical side of her leadership had not developed particularly much during the first two years of her studies. During the rest of her studies, Student E planned to develop her leadership by taking a course in leadership or applying to basic studies in educational leadership. In general, Student E planned to continue exploring those ways of doing that would suit her as a teacher leader. In this inquiry process, she planned to utilize especially the future teaching practices: "...I am going to inquire about what means work for me and, in my opinion, it is also interesting to see how the other teachers act because the same means may not work for all teachers."

#### Discussion

The aim of the present study was to examine the leadership development of the student teachers studying in a Finnish teacher education program that included a study group on teacher leadership as its special feature. First, we identified three types of leadership development approaches among the five student participants: competence-, personality-, and context-driven. Second, we found that the students representing the competence-driven approach to leadership development especially utilized teaching practices (with the special aim of enhancing practical competence) and the students with the personality-driven approach the TL study group (with the special emphasis on holistic personal growth and reflective approach) to support their leadership development. The student representing the context-driven approach utilized the study program in her leadership development process rather diversely. Third, based on students' reflections on their achieved leadership development, including the factors supporting and preventing this development, our findings revealed that students with a competence-driven approach estimated the support of the teacher education program for their leadership development less than the estimates of the two other student types. The students with a personality- and context-driven approach seemed to emphasize in their leadership development a holistic and reflective inquiry process, including pondering and developing their teacher leadership identities (Lanas & Kelchtermans, 2015; Väisänen, 2005; Wagner, 2011). Thus, it seems that the students representing these two approaches engaged themselves in the holistic and reflective process of professional development typically highlighted in Finnish teacher education (Silander & Välijärvi, 2013; Väisänen, 2005).

Based on this research, it seemed that the student teachers developed their leadership in the class teacher education program in various ways and areas, including pedagogical and leadership-related knowledge, values, and personal qualities, as well as practical skills (Desimone, 2009; Metsäpelto et al., 2021; Sessa, 2017). In this development process, the students' individual approaches to leadership development (Morgan & Neil, 2003) were emphasized, and they appeared quite stable during the first two years of their studies, continuing to the students' plans for the rest of their class teacher education studies. The type of leadership development approach seemed to be connected to individual factors, especially the amount of previous leadership experience (Joint Task Force, 1998; Owen, 2011, p. 113). For example, students with less previous leadership experience tended to focus on developing their practical leadership skills and competences (cf. Smylie & Eckert, 2018). By contrast, possessing more previous leadership experience seemed to enable the students to focus on developing and modifying their leadership skills from "general" leadership or leadership in another context toward context-related leadership, for example, in the primary school context (cf. Mc-Cauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

The class teacher education program as a leadership development environment included various elements supporting the students' leadership development, such as teaching practices for enhancing practical leadership development, a study group consisting of peer students sharing a special interest in developing their leadership, support from facilitators, and flexibility in the degree structure, which enabled the students to include optional leadership studies in their degree (cf. Keeling, 2004; Owen, 2011; Wagner, 2011, p. 93). However, the students perceived limitations in how the class teacher education program supported their leadership development, particularly in the area of practical leadership development. The students estimated that the COVID-19 restrictions resulting in long-term remote studying decreased the number of practical leadership exercises in their teacher education studies during the first two years.

This study also indicated that although the students seemed to successfully lead their individual development processes, no continuous and coordinated support for them in leading these processes existed in the study program. Establishing this kind of support could help the students identify and set even more diverse leadership development goals and utilize the available support in the study program more broadly (cf. Hanhimäki & Risku, 2021). The support could include, for example, expanding TL group meetings beyond the first year of study and adding practical peer leadership

exercises to these meetings. Additionally, the study group meetings could include peer support for the students by offering opportunities to share ideas and experiences of the leadership development goals and the related support in the teacher education context. In addition, personal leadership development plans, including development goals and means for achieving them, could be created for every TL student with the assistance of TL facilitators. Furthermore, courses that directly discuss leadership in a teacher's work could be added to teacher education curricula.

There are some limitations to this study. The number of participants was comparatively small, and the study aimed at examining their individual leadership development, for which reason the results cannot be traditionally generalized beyond the given cases (Patton, 2015). However, the data concerning the five participants were rich, enabling holistic qualitative inquiry into the cases well (Patton, 2015). Additionally, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the transferability of the case studies' working hypotheses might be possible between two separate contexts if there is a sufficient degree of congruence between the contexts (see also Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2009). Aligned with this view, it can be assumed that the five student cases may also represent the other students studying in the TL study group to some extent. It should be noted that the students wrote the motivation letters for a certain purpose—the application process to the study groups. Before writing the motivation letters, the students participated in a briefing in which university teachers introduced the study group options for application. It is possible that the content of the motivation letters was influenced by the briefing and that, in the motivation letters, the students pursued appealing the jury responsible for the student admissions instead of presenting their genuine reasons for applying to the TL study group. However, the content of the motivation letters was congruent with the content of the interviews, which suggests the genuine expression of motives and reasons indicated in the motivation letters. Qualitative interviews enable gaining insights into how the participants subjectively perceive their leadership development but do not examine the phenomenon 'objectively' (see deRoche & deRoche, 2010).

#### **Conclusions**

The present research indicates that student teachers developed their leadership individually in initial teacher education (cf., e.g., Morgan & Neil, 2003; Sinha & Hanuscin, 2017) and that teacher education, although including shared learning goals and components, enabled a sufficient level of flexibility and space for this purpose. The results show initial teacher education as an important context and phase for developing diverse teacher leadership, which is aligned with the scholars' statements regarding teacher education as the phase for creating the basis for continuous leadership development (e.g., Forster, 1997). Based on this study's findings, we consider it worthy that future studies investigate whether the process of generating the professional identity

of a teacher leader and developing the practical side of leadership could be supported in initial teacher education to a greater extent. For example, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) suggested ways for integrating practical and inclusive leadership development into pre-service teacher education. Additionally, it is important to ensure that student teachers are not given too much responsibility in leading their individual leadership development processes but are provided with sufficient support that might help them reach even more holistic leadership development during their pre-service phase. It should be noted that the participants in this study clearly recognized their own leadership (development) potential, which cannot be considered self-evident (cf., e.g., Bond, 2011). This recognition was probably supported by the TL study group that was scheduled in the first year of the studies and that discussed such themes as leadership in a teacher's work and leading one's own professional development process.

In the future, it would be interesting to examine how the student teachers evaluated their achieved leadership development in their graduation and induction phases. It would also be interesting to study these teachers in the later stages of their teacher education studies to assess potential changes in their leadership development approaches, which appeared rather stable in this study. The present research contributes to the previous literature by providing knowledge of individual leadership development in the initial teacher education phase, on which topic the previous research is scarce, and by identifying initial teacher education as a leadership development context. Through this, this study contributes to research-based suggestions and solutions for supporting leadership development in teacher education.

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## III

# EMPLOYING RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN TEACHER EDUCATION TO ENHANCE STUDENT TEACHERS' LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY

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