

**INVESTIGATING THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF  
THE *LEVEL THREE CLASSROOM TEACHER* IN WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA**

Rosana Mary Stout BA, Grad Dip Ed, M Ed

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I declare that this thesis is my account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Rosana Stout

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## Abstract

Increasingly, schools are urged to rethink leadership based on positional authority and move towards more participative styles of governance, embracing teachers as leaders (Andrews & Lewis, 2004; Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson & Hann, 2007; Frost & Harris, 2003). This study examines the enactment of teacher leadership in the context of the West Australian *Level Three Classroom Teacher* classification, an initiative that recognizes and promotes the leadership of expert classroom teachers. The researcher investigated the extent to which the initiative engenders teacher leadership and, the nature and scope of the leadership. Competing discourses of accountability and empowerment that promote and constrain teacher leadership were examined to interrogate the extent to which the Level Three Classroom Teacher program, in creating another space at the leadership table, provides a genuine opportunity for teachers to lead.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to interrogate Level Three Classroom Teachers' survey responses and Department of Education policy to identify the binaries or slippage between the rhetoric of policy and the practice of teacher leadership in schools. In recognition of the centrality of language, discourse analysis and narrative deconstruction informed by Mockler's (2004) and Boje's (2001) frameworks were employed to map leadership practices and the cultural narrative of the Level Three Classroom Teacher.

Highlighted in this research is the importance of emotions. The study affirmed that motivation to lead is bound up in teacher identity, self-efficacy and collegiality. The creation of categories of teachers such as expert and non-expert or leader and non-

leader in policy discourse and school practices resulted in a form of *othering* that could be deemed counter-productive to participative leadership. An implication of these findings is the need for further study to examine how policy may constrain teacher leadership. If more teachers are to seize this leadership opportunity and make a real difference to how schools are led, there is also a need for professional learning that explicitly targets teacher leadership. Such learning also needs to acknowledge the complexity of emotions and the micro politics of schools.

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This is a study about teachers working as leaders in school. My interest in the lives of teachers is testament to some amazing individuals who taught me, those that mentored me in my early days as a teacher and those that I have worked alongside since. My motivation to write about teachers is the courage and integrity of my peers. I acknowledge those teachers who have shared my teaching journey, many of whom are dear friends. I dedicate this thesis to them, in particular to Eleanor who began the journey with me so long ago. You are always with me.

## **List of Abbreviations**

AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and learning and School Leadership
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CMIS	Classroom Management in Schools
CMS	Classroom Management Strategy
DET	Western Australian Department of Education and Training (Formally also known as Education Department of WA, The Ministry of Education of WA, Department of Education of WA and since 2010, known as WA Department of Education, DoE).
DoE	WA Department of Education
EA	Educational Assistant
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ESU	Educational Support Unit
ETWR	Experienced Teacher with Responsibility
IDEAS	Innovative Designs for Enhancing Australian Schools
GATE / G&T	Gifted and Talented Education
GIR / GIRL	Getting it Right Literacy Teacher
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LCT	Level Three Classroom Teacher
LOLSO	Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes project (LOLSO)
MCEEDYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs.

MCCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
PD	Professional Development
PP	Pre-Primary
SAER	Students at Educational Risk
SES	Socio Economic Status
S&E	Society and Environment
SMTs	Senior Management Teams
SIS	Student Information System
TEE	Tertiary Entrance Examination
TIC	Teacher in Charge
SSTUWA	State School Teachers Union of Western Australia
WALNA	West Australian Literacy and Numeracy Assessment