

## **Teacher Leaders as Agents of Innovation Diffusion**

**Anete Butkēviča**<sup>1</sup> M.sc.soc.; **Aija Zobena**<sup>2</sup> Dr.sc.soc./ professor  
University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, Latvia<sup>1,2</sup>  
[anete.kev@gmail.com](mailto:anete.kev@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>; [aija.zobena@lu.lv](mailto:aija.zobena@lu.lv)<sup>2</sup>

Educational science is putting forward teachers as leaders and change agents capable of bringing necessary improvements in how both student learning and teacher continuous professional development is taking place at the school. This article looks at how teacher leaders understand and organize their teaching and collaborate with their colleagues, and how by doing so promote diffusion of social innovations (new forms of professional relationships) and pedagogical innovations (e.g. teaching approaches in the classroom). Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with five teacher leaders from schools in urban and rural areas. Additionally, two expert interviews were also conducted. Analysis of the results give a descriptive explanation of how teacher leaders influence innovation diffusion in their school and district, what kind of obstacles they face, and what kind of other groups of agents are involved in this process. Findings show the most distinct aspect of teacher leaders: a deep understanding of a need to experiment with new teaching approaches; continuous acquisition of new experience; an openness to share their experience with colleagues. In the light of these findings, the article discusses how the work of teacher leaders can be further supported by involving school administration to partake tasks related to not only administrative duties but also teaching and student learning. Further research is needed to uncover how distributed leadership between teachers and school administration can support diffusion of new and useful teaching practices and help reach schools' organizational goals.

**Keywords:** teacher leaders, distributed leadership, innovation diffusion