

Distributed Leadership and its Affect to Self-efficacy of University Teachers: Toward a Faculty Leadership Development Program

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the influence of distributed leadership on university teachers' self-efficacy, and puts forward a teacher leadership development project. By literature review and analysis, this paper analyzes the theory of distributed leadership of university teachers and related research, and puts forward a teacher leadership development project, which includes four steps: explore teachers' leadership potential, establish corresponding distributed leadership training programs for teachers, promote teacher team cooperation and communication and establish a distributed leadership development community for teachers. Through the implementation of this project, university teachers can enhance their leadership and self-efficacy, and improve their teaching performance and student satisfaction.

Keywords

University Teacher; Distributed Leadership; Self-Efficacy; Teacher Leadership Development Program.

1. Introduction

As the foundation of the era of knowledge economy, higher education institutions shoulder the heavy responsibility of cultivating outstanding talents for the society. Teachers are an indispensable part of higher education. They are the guides and instructors of students' learning and growth. However, for university teachers, the complexity of teaching, scientific research and administrative work often makes teachers face pressure and challenges. How to improve the leadership and self-efficacy of university teachers is an urgent problem in the current education sector.

In recent years, distributed leadership has gradually become a new leadership theory. Distributed leadership believes that leadership is not only accomplished by leaders, but by all members of the organization. Therefore, distributed leadership plays an increasingly important role in the organization. The distributed leadership of university teachers refers to a way of leadership to achieve the school goals through the joint efforts of all members within the organization. Distributed leadership can effectively improve the leadership and self-efficacy of university teachers, thus improving their teaching performance and student satisfaction.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the distributed leadership of university teachers and its influence on teachers' self-efficacy, and put forward a project to develop teachers' leadership, so as to help university teachers improve their distributed leadership ability and self-efficacy and improve the teaching quality.

2. The Theory of Distributed Leadership

2.1. Theoretical Overview of Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is a relatively new leadership theory, and its core idea is that leadership is not only accomplished by leaders, but by all members of the organization. The emergence of distributed leadership theory is mainly to make up for the shortcomings of traditional leadership theory, such as single leader model and authoritarianism. According to the theory of distributed leadership, leadership should be a process of joint efforts, which involves the participation and contribution of all organizational members. Therefore, the practice of distributed leadership can effectively improve the performance and innovation ability of the organization.

Distributed leadership emphasizes that leadership is a decentralized process in the organization, which is not only completed by leaders, but also promoted by members of the organization [1]. The theoretical core of distributed leadership is "co-leadership" and "social learning", and these two concepts are its uniqueness and advantages. In the application of distributed leadership theory, organizational members are regarded as individuals with autonomy and creativity, and their abilities and wisdom can be fully brought into play, thus achieving organizational goals and values. The practice of distributed leadership can be manifested in many levels. For example, in an organization, employees at different levels can give full play to leadership and lead in different situations. Leaders are not necessarily people with power. In the practice of distributed leadership, cooperation, communication and trust among team members are also very important, because only in this way can distributed leadership exert its greatest effect.

2.2. The Main Theoretical Representatives of Distributed Leadership

The concept of distributed leadership was first put forward by Pilia, an American educator. In the process of studying educational leadership, he found that the traditional leadership model often emphasizes the authority and status of leaders and ignores the potential and wisdom of organization members. Therefore, he put forward the idea of distributed leadership, thinking that leadership should not be undertaken by a single leader, but should be dispersed to all levels and members of the organization.

The theory of distributed leadership has been widely concerned and studied. In the field of education, American educational scholars Pilia, Hammond, Gardner and others have carried out relevant research. In the field of organizational management, British scholar Gorman and American scholar Bells have also done a lot of research work. In addition, distributed leadership has been widely used in military, medical and other fields.

Harry J. Wong is a famous American educator and best-selling author [2]. His book *The First Days of School* is regarded as one of the classics that teachers must read. The distributed leadership viewpoint he put forward is that every teacher should be regarded as a leader and have the ability of independent decision-making and organization, so as to jointly contribute to students' learning and development.

Samuel Casey Carter is a famous educator and advocate of educational reform in the United States [3]. He once served as principal and education official in public schools in several states. He put forward the viewpoint of distributed leadership that the success of educational organizations depends not only on the principal, but on the cooperation of all teachers, students and parents. Therefore, teachers should have the ability of self-management, independent decision-making and organization, and jointly provide support and help for students' learning and development.

Kenneth Leithwood is a famous Canadian educator and expert in educational policy research. He is one of the main promoters of distributed leadership theory in education [4]. He put

forward the viewpoint of distributed leadership, which is that the leadership in educational organizations should not only be undertaken by principals and teaching leaders, but should be shared by all teachers and administrators. This kind of distributed leadership can improve the adaptability and flexibility of educational organizations, enhance mutual trust and cooperation among teachers, and thus realize the overall efficiency of educational organizations.

The three scholars' views on distributed leadership are similar, and they all emphasize the importance of cooperation and participation between teachers and students for the development of educational organizations.

3. The Characteristics of Distributed Leadership of University Teachers

University teachers are the most important resources in higher education, and their quality and performance are crucial to the development of the whole school. However, under the traditional leadership mode, university teachers usually accept the command and management of the school leaders as "subordinates". This one-way leadership mode is easy to cause the resistance and disgust of university teachers, which will affect the organizational efficiency and performance of the school. The distributed leadership model can better stimulate the enthusiasm and creativity of university teachers and realize the all-round development of the whole school.

The characteristics of distributed leadership of university teachers mainly include the following aspects:

Autonomy and independence: The distributed leadership model emphasizes everyone's autonomy and independence. University teachers can give full play to their professional knowledge and experience in school management and leadership, and at the same time they need to bear more responsibilities and obligations. This autonomy and independence can stimulate the enthusiasm and creativity of university teachers.

Cooperation and collaboration: The distributed leadership model emphasizes cooperation and collaboration. In school management and leadership, university teachers need to cooperate and collaborate with other leaders, teachers and students to jointly promote the development of the school.

Trust and respect: the distributed leadership model focuses on establishing a relationship based on trust and respect. School management and leadership need to listen to the opinions and suggestions of university teachers, respect their professional knowledge and experience, and provide necessary support and help.

Openness and transparency: The distributed leadership model pays attention to openness and transparency. School management and leadership need to disclose all kinds of information and decisions of the school to university teachers in time, so that university teachers can understand the situation and development direction of the school and improve their work enthusiasm and sense of responsibility.

Innovation and learning: the distributed leadership model emphasizes innovation and learning. School management and leadership need to encourage university teachers to try new teaching methods and teaching techniques, and constantly explore and innovate. At the same time, they also need to provide corresponding training and support to keep university teachers' learning attitude and mentality.

In a word, the characteristics of distributed leadership of university teachers are diverse and rich, which can stimulate the creativity and enthusiasm of university teachers and improve the organizational efficiency and performance of the whole school. Under the distributed leadership mode, university teachers are no longer simply "subordinates", but can play their

professional knowledge and experience, actively participate in the management and decision-making of the school, and make greater contributions to the development of the school.

4. The Influence of Distributed Leadership on Teachers' Self-efficacy

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy refers to teachers' confidence and belief that they can effectively complete their tasks. Research shows that teachers' self-efficacy can directly or indirectly affect their work motivation, work performance, professional satisfaction and so on. From the perspective of distributed leadership, teachers' sense of self-efficacy is influenced by many factors, which are explained in detail from different angles below.

Establishing trust relationship is one of the core characteristics of distributed leadership. Teachers can feel the trust and support from leaders and colleagues under distributed leadership, which plays an important role in improving teachers' sense of self-efficacy. With the support of trust relationship, teachers are more confident and active in coping with the challenges and difficulties in their work. Researcher Lu Fangfang and others (2018) found that distributed leadership can improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy through a questionnaire survey of teachers in a university in China [5]. The results show that establishing trust relationship and encouraging teachers to participate in decision-making are the two most important factors in distributed leadership, which can enhance teachers' confidence and motivation, thus improving their sense of self-efficacy.

Distributed leadership can enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy by providing support and resources. Under the distributed leadership, teachers can get support and help from leaders and colleagues, such as providing teaching resources and sharing teaching experience, which can help teachers complete their tasks better and improve their sense of self-efficacy. Li Xiaohui (2021), a researcher, found that distributed leadership can enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy by providing support and resources [6]. The results show that teachers' sense of self-efficacy has been improved after receiving the support and help from leaders and colleagues, especially in teaching reform and teaching and scientific research.

Distributed leadership can enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy by providing feedback and recognition. Under distributed leadership, teachers can get positive feedback and recognition from leaders and colleagues, such as affirmation and praise of teaching achievements. These feedback and recognition can help teachers establish their sense of self-efficacy, which is one of the important goals of distributed leadership.

Distributed leaders should provide teachers with support and resources to help them overcome difficulties and challenges, thus enhancing their sense of self-efficacy. This includes providing training and professional development opportunities, providing enough time and space for teachers to complete their tasks, and providing them with the necessary technology and equipment. For example, the research by researchers Schwarzer and Hallum(2008) shows that the provision of workplace support and resources is very important to improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy [7]. Their research adopts the questionnaire survey method to investigate employees from different occupational fields. The results show that employees who get support and resources have more self-efficacy than those who don't.

Distributed leaders should provide teachers with learning opportunities and feedback mechanisms to help them improve their teaching and professional skills. This can be achieved by providing training courses, workshops, seminars and other learning opportunities. In addition, distributed leaders should communicate with teachers regularly and provide constructive feedback and guidance to help them find their own strengths and weaknesses, so as to improve their sense of self-efficacy. For example, the research of Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk Hoy (2004) shows that providing feedback and guidance can help teachers improve their sense of self-efficacy [8]. Their research adopts the methods of questionnaire survey and

interview, and investigates teachers from different schools. The results show that those teachers who get feedback and guidance have more self-efficacy than those who don't.

Distributed leaders should encourage teachers to support and cooperate with each other and establish a good team atmosphere and cooperative culture. The cooperation between teachers can promote the sharing of knowledge and resources, and enhance teachers' professional skills and self-efficacy. For example, research by researchers Liu, Huang and Wang (2018) shows that cooperation among teachers can promote teachers' self-efficacy, thus enhancing their distributed leadership [9]. Taking the teachers in a university as the research object, the researchers collected a large amount of data through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. It is found that the cooperation among teachers in the form of mutual support, mutual assistance and joint learning can improve teachers' sense of self-efficacy and enhance their understanding and application ability of distributed leadership. Especially in the teaching and education reform, the cooperation between teachers can give full play to each teacher's professional expertise, improve the teaching effect and quality, and then improve the education level of the whole school.

In addition, there are some other angles that can explain the influence of distributed leadership on teachers' self-efficacy. For example, distributed leadership can improve teachers' autonomy and innovation, thus enhancing their sense of self-efficacy. Researchers Dilantha and Gamage (2021) found that distributed leadership can promote teachers' autonomy and innovation, thus improving their sense of self-efficacy [10]. In addition, distributed leadership can provide more learning and development opportunities, thus helping teachers to improve their professional ability and self-confidence and enhance their sense of self-efficacy. Researchers Wang and Jiang (2019) found that distributed leadership can enhance teachers' self-efficacy by providing more opportunities for learning and development [11].

To sum up, distributed leadership has many effects on teachers' self-efficacy, including improving teachers' trust, cooperation awareness and career satisfaction, improving teachers' autonomy and innovation, and providing more opportunities for learning and development. These influences can directly or indirectly enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy, thus improving their teaching quality and teaching results.

5. Establish a Distributed Leadership Development Project for Teachers

In today's higher education, teachers' distributed leadership is increasingly important. Teachers are the most important resources in educational organizations. They need not only excellently teaching skills, but also leadership and teamwork spirit, and can cooperate with colleagues and students to jointly promote the development of educational organizations. Therefore, it is very necessary to establish a distributed leadership development project for teachers. This paper will put forward some suggestions on the establishment of teachers' distributed leadership development projects from various angles.

5.1. Explore Teachers' Leadership Potential

The first step to establish a distributed leadership development project for teachers is to explore teachers' leadership potential. Teachers usually have certain leadership abilities in teaching, but these abilities may be covered up or not fully exerted [12]. Therefore, through the personalized evaluation of teachers' leadership potential, we can understand their potential leadership ability, so as to better cultivate and play their leadership potential. There are many methods to evaluate teachers' leadership potential, such as quantitative evaluation with psychological measurement tools or situational observation and interview. Through the evaluation, we can determine the strengths and weaknesses of teachers in all aspects of leadership ability, and determine the corresponding leadership development plan.

5.2. Establish a Distributed Leadership Training Plan

It is very important to establish corresponding distributed leadership training programs for teachers at different levels. For junior teachers, we can develop their cooperation ability, leadership and teamwork ability by holding classes and seminars. For senior teachers and heads of teaching and research groups, more in-depth and professional training courses can be carried out, including team management, conflict resolution, communication skills, strategic planning and so on. The content and form of the training plan should be customized according to the needs of teachers and leaders at different levels. At the same time, by bringing teachers into interdisciplinary teams and project teams, their collaboration and leadership skills can be improved, and they can continue to explore and practice the concept of distributed leadership in practice.

5.3. Promote Teacher Team Cooperation and Communication

Teamwork and communication among teachers is an important means to promote the development of distributed leadership. Teamwork and communication among teachers can promote the sharing of knowledge and information, improve the teaching effect of teachers and students' learning results. In order to promote teachers' team cooperation and communication, we can create various opportunities for cooperation and communication. For example, teachers can be organized to hold regular team meetings, seminars, teaching exchange classes, etc., so that teachers have the opportunity to exchange teaching experiences and help each other solve teaching problems. Under the concept of distributed leadership, sharing platform has become an important organizational form, which can effectively promote the sharing, cooperation and interaction of information and knowledge and improve the overall performance of the team. For college teachers, establishing a shared platform can not only meet their needs of study, research and teaching, but also help to improve teachers' professional level and teaching quality. On this platform, various types of training and exchange activities can be organized, such as lectures, seminars, workshops, teaching observation and so on. These activities should be selected and organized according to the needs and interests of teachers. At the same time, in order to ensure the quality of activities, professional teachers should be invited to teach and guide. These teachers can be teachers, experts or professionals outside the school.

5.4. Establish a Distributed Leadership Development Community for Teachers

In addition to teacher training and exchange activities, it is also necessary to establish a distributed leadership development community for teachers [13]. This community can be an online community or an offline community. In this community, teachers can share their own teaching experience and teaching management experience, and also consult and learn from other teachers. Through these exchanges and interactions, we can promote cooperation and collaboration among teachers, enhance teachers' professional quality and teaching ability, and thus improve teachers' distributed leadership. In this community, you can set up various types of topics or sections, such as teaching skills, teaching management, curriculum design and so on. Teachers can express their opinions or raise questions in these topics or sections, and other teachers can also answer questions or raise their own opinions in these topics or sections. At the same time, in order to ensure the quality and order of the community, it is necessary to set up some management and supervision mechanisms, such as setting up administrators and formulating community rules.

Through the above efforts, we can further stimulate teachers' innovative thinking and practical ability, improve teachers' teaching level and teaching quality, and thus promote the development of education.

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