

The Development of Educational Leadership among Secondary School Teachers in China

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Abstract. Educational leadership is a hot topic in 21st-century education research, and countries worldwide attach great importance to the development of educational leadership. Educational leadership, as a comprehensive competency, has gradually become a crucial criterion for assessing teachers' professional proficiency. As the pivotal stage between primary and secondary education in China's nine-year compulsory education system, middle schools rely heavily on their teachers--the backbone of school education--whose development of educational leadership is of utmost importance. Exploring the educational leadership of Chinese middle school teachers not only broadens teachers' horizons but also provides sustained impetus for schools and students. This study focuses on analyzing the characteristics and significance of educational leadership, along with the current challenges, to understand the development of Chinese middle school teachers' educational leadership and propose scientific pathways. The findings reveal that China's middle school teachers' leadership remains in its preliminary developmental stage, requiring systematic improvements through professional knowledge, relevant policies, and other measures to gradually enhance its growth.

Keywords: Middle School Teacher, Education, Leadership

1. Introduction

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Party and the state have always attached great importance to education, and the education industry has achieved universally recognized great achievements. Especially since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China has continuously accelerated the modernization of education, built a strong education country, and provided satisfactory education for the people, achieving remarkable results. As educators in schools, only with strong educational leadership can people scientifically absorb and learn from advanced foreign education experiences based on China's unique historical culture and current national conditions, scientifically design and correctly implement school education, and contribute intelligence and wisdom to the socialist education cause with Chinese characteristics.

Against the backdrop of intense international competition in education, research on educational leadership is gradually expanding from management to frontline teachers. As the backbone of classroom teaching, middle school teachers' leadership is not only reflected in the teaching process but also in classroom innovation, teamwork, and other aspects. Therefore, exploring the

development direction of educational leadership for middle school teachers has both theoretical and practical significance.

The core theme of this study is to explore the development of educational leadership among Chinese middle school teachers by analyzing the meaning, characteristics, significance, and current advantages and challenges of Chinese teacher education leadership, and to propose a scientific path. The innovation of this study lies in analyzing teacher education leadership within the context of the education system and cultural background with Chinese characteristics, and proposing clear and well-founded development suggestions.

2. Definition and theoretical framework of educational leadership

2.1. The meaning of educational leadership for middle school teachers

The teaching leadership of middle school teachers is the core of the school, a key factor affecting the quality of education, and an important force in promoting the development of the school's connotation. The connotation of teacher development in schools is not fixed. In different periods, countries, or regions, it may vary due to changes in societal development needs. Overall, its connotation is continuously expanding and gradually developing toward the lifelong growth of individuals [1]. In the mid-1980s, some scholars clearly defined the connotation of teaching leadership and proposed a new explanatory framework. American scholars Philip H. Mihlinger and Joseph Murphy define instructional leadership as the behavior of a principal leading and managing the teaching work of a school, promoting the teaching of teachers and the learning of students. Drawing on the job analysis techniques of human resource management, the key work areas, functions, and behaviors of principal teaching leadership were proposed. Determine the three core dimensions of "defining school mission", "managing curriculum and teaching", and "creating a positive school atmosphere", and finally, further subdivide the 10 teaching leadership functions. This "three-dimensional, ten-function" model clearly and explicitly points out the work corresponding to different identities from two aspects: "dimension" and "function".

However, there are fundamental differences between teacher education leadership and principal leadership. Teacher leadership focuses more on guiding learning both inside and outside the classroom and influencing students' long-term development. For example, the educational leadership of middle school teachers includes political and ideological guidance, using socialist core values to help them form positive values, and even helping students feel the cultural heritage of traditional China and guiding them to inherit it. This is the transformation of teacher education leadership from "unilateral leadership" to "distributed leadership". In terms of leadership methods, leadership is about not leading. As a leader, one should be good at finding other factors that can replace leadership, such as commitment to values, motivation for work itself, and a sense of team responsibility. It is effective to solve school management problems from the perspective of management ethics, such as "care" and "authorization" [2]. From ancient times to the present, teachers should not only have an impact on students' professional development in the classroom, but also promote their all-around development in multiple aspects and dimensions. Especially for frontline teachers in middle school, they should play a positive guiding and exemplary role in shaping students' thoughts, behaviors, and other aspects. In daily learning and life, they should have a subtle influence on students' growth, just like the ancient poet Du Fu wrote, "The wind sneaks into the night, moistening everything silently." However, early research focused more on the role of formal leaders such as principals. Nowadays, the role of teachers as leaders should gradually be

valued. Teachers can fully play a leadership role in classrooms, research groups, schools, and other organizations.

2.2. Characteristics of educational leadership of middle school teachers

From the perspective of development history, teacher leadership has had informal and professional characteristics since its inception [3]. Among them, informality refers to not following fixed rules and procedures, emphasizing that the leadership of middle school teachers deviates from the legal or official scope. The teaching leadership of principals and teachers is not completely unrelated; it can still obtain useful references from the theoretical framework of principals' teaching leadership to construct an evaluation index system for teachers' teaching leadership [4]. For example, comparing the leadership of both teachers and principals, the principal has legal authority over the position, while the leadership of teachers relies solely on their personal charisma rather than official grants. Secondly, professionalism refers to individuals possessing profound knowledge and operating effectively in a specific field. This refers to the fact that the leadership of middle school teachers mostly relies on their strong professional skills and reliable abilities and levels. The educational leadership of middle school teachers includes informal but professional characteristics. In addition to informality and professionalism, the educational leadership of Chinese middle school teachers also has moral guidance. In the Chinese educational tradition, "learning from high school as a teacher and being a role model" reflects the leadership role of teachers as moral role models. This viewpoint is interpreted in the meaning of educational leadership of middle school teachers. At the same time, the educational leadership of middle school teachers also includes situational adaptability. Most middle school students are in adolescence, which means that during this period, students generally experience significant emotional fluctuations, a wide range of emotions, and diverse cognitive needs. Teachers need to quickly adapt to the different emotional or knowledge needs of each student, and flexibly adjust their teacher-student relationships and classroom atmosphere. For example, when conflicts arise between students, as a teacher, one must not only calm the emotions of each student, quickly downplay the conflict, but also act as a moral demonstrator, rationally and professionally analyze the core of the conflict, and provide positive guidance to students to cultivate correct values and their own problem-solving abilities. This requires high school teachers to have quick reaction and adaptation abilities. In summary, the educational leadership of middle school teachers has significant characteristics of informality and professionalism in the early stage, and gradually shows significant features such as moral guidance and situational adaptability in the later stage.

2.3. The significance of educational leadership for middle school teachers

The essence of educational leadership is educational influence. The ideal leadership of Chinese middle school teachers should be a joint force formed by educationalists who are political, knowledgeable in education, and capable of management [5]. From a micro perspective, firstly, the leadership of middle school teachers plays a role in instilling and educating, which promotes the improvement of teachers' and students' professional abilities, and promotes the gradual development of students' personalities. Secondly, the educational leadership of teachers can have a greater impact on the development of the entire education team and school. Some teachers actively participate in teaching and research activities, professional training, and enhance their teaching abilities, playing a demonstrative and leading role. Sharing teaching experience with colleagues afterwards, promoting the common growth of the teaching team, and creating an atmosphere of mutual assistance, learning,

cooperation, and progress. Moreover, as more and more teachers possess educational leadership, the quality of teaching, overall reputation, and the degree of close connection between graduating students and the school will greatly improve, injecting a continuous stream of vitality into the sustainable development of the school. From a macro perspective, firstly, the leadership of middle school teachers has met the needs of satisfying education for the people. To provide satisfactory education for the people, for schools, it is necessary to create a good learning environment for students, so that they can learn and achieve success. In a certain sense, running a satisfactory education for the people means running schools well [5]. Thirdly, the leadership of middle school teachers meets the needs of building a socialist education powerhouse. It must base ourselves on the national conditions, follow the laws of educational development, and achieve the strategic goal of building a strong education country. Therefore, it must attach great importance to educational leadership. Every educator must cultivate and develop educational leadership according to the standards of educators, laying a solid foundation for achieving an educational powerhouse [5].

3. Evaluation and problems of educational leadership of Chinese middle school teachers

3.1. Advantages of educational leadership for middle school teachers

The educational leadership of Chinese middle school teachers is outstanding in terms of teaching influence and sense of responsibility in educating and nurturing students. In terms of educational influence, middle school teachers generally possess solid subject knowledge and classroom organization skills through systematic education and practice, which constitute their educational leadership. Behavioral science research points out that influence is an interpersonal communication ability, and leader influence is composed of both power influence and non-power influence. In the field of education, the relationship between teachers and students is one of guidance and being guided, management and being managed, and leadership and being led. Therefore, the theory of leader influence in behavioral science also applies to teachers; that is, the educational influence of teachers is a reflection of their interpersonal communication skills [6]. At the same time, the educational leadership of middle school teachers has also achieved great success in terms of sense of responsibility, which is influenced by traditional educational concepts and a system dominated by Confucianism, including theoretical frameworks such as individualized teaching, moral education first, and no discrimination in education. The sense of responsibility of middle school teachers is reflected in three aspects: students, professional courses, and schools. For students, teachers not only focus on their grades, but also care about their character quality, mental health, and overall development. In terms of professional competence, the teaching team adheres to educational theory and continues to learn. For schools, teachers complete the teaching tasks assigned by the school and contribute to building a good reputation for the school. These points collectively shape the sense of responsibility among Chinese middle school teachers. Therefore, leadership in secondary education presents an advantageous state in terms of teaching influence and sense of responsibility in nurturing students.

3.2. The weak links in the educational leadership of middle school teachers

There are two main contradictions in the field of educational leadership research: one is the contradiction between the vast research system and the narrow field of discovery. As James McGregor Burns, a master of leadership studies, once said, "Leadership is one of the most visible but least understood phenomena on Earth, and the difficulties caused by narrow professional fields

are unprecedented in other disciplines. The problem of comprehensive theory remains unresolved; The second is the contradiction between the rapid development of educational leadership and the scattered research and development from a multidisciplinary perspective [7]. The educational leadership of Chinese middle school teachers needs to be improved in terms of team collaboration and classroom innovation. The main problem with team collaboration is that the collaborative activities are too superficial, and the teacher's participation is not sufficient. For example, in the teaching and research activities provided by schools, most teachers participate passively and lack initiative, which can easily fall into the trap of "formalism" and make it difficult for team collaboration to have substantial improvement. Secondly, there is a lack of ability to build a shared vision, and teachers are unwilling to listen, learn from each other, and guide each other in team collaboration. The core is that it is difficult to transform school goals into goals that are recognized and willing to be put in effort by all members of the teacher team. More teachers are only willing to be busy dealing with their own specific teaching tasks, and are unwilling to turn individuals into groups.

The main problem with classroom innovation is that the classroom mode of middle school teachers is stuck in a bottleneck period and is gradually solidifying. For example, when teachers teach, the classroom becomes a "one-man show", lacking interaction and thinking collision with students. Secondly, the teaching content of each teacher is very similar, making it difficult to meet the personalized teaching characteristics of students. These are the problems faced by middle school teachers in teaching today, and over time, their influence will also be negatively affected.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Teacher enhancement strategies

Chinese middle school teachers need to enhance their educational leadership through team innovation and personal influence. Teachers should not be limited to the imparters of professional knowledge. Because information has been lost in the process of transmission, teachers should do a good job as a catalyst for team innovation and cooperation, improve their influence through their own excellent professional knowledge, make full use of scientific research activities provided by the school and other activities to absorb essence from outside, and actively disclose knowledge achievements in the team to form a sense of team, and regard team cooperation ability as an important pillar of teacher leadership development. Through the cultivation and practice of teams, it should achieve the transition from self to team, and improve educational leadership from childhood to adulthood. At the practical level, middle school teachers can adopt the following specific strategies: firstly, establish a personal leadership development profile and design how to develop their own leadership based on their own conditions and needs; The second is to, seek leadership mentors, cultivate their own abilities through mentorship, and form a sense of teamwork; Third, timely reflection. Teaching reflection refers to the process by which teachers, to achieve effective education and teaching, and supported by a tendency for teaching reflection, engage in continuous, thorough, in-depth, and self-regulatory thinking about educational and teaching activities that have occurred or are occurring, as well as the theories and assumptions behind these activities. During this process of thinking, teachers are able to identify and clearly represent the educational and teaching issues they encounter and actively seek multiple ways to solve these problems [8]. Fourth, it is a process that requires patience and continuous efforts to participate in external exchanges, remove the dross from the essence, and strengthen and expand the vision of leadership and their own influence. The reward is a strong, resilient, dynamic, and intelligent high-quality education group.

4.2. School's security policies

Schools need to ensure the leadership of Chinese high school teachers from both institutional and resource perspectives. In terms of the system, schools should first recognize the informal nature of leadership among Chinese middle school teachers and pay attention to it. Schools can focus on cultivating teachers' management abilities while ensuring the teaching of their professional knowledge, and give teachers more professional autonomy. Improve its evaluation system, create a good atmosphere that encourages teachers to exert their leadership through sharing successful cases of leadership, and promote teachers' confidence in fully utilizing educational leadership. In terms of resources, schools should establish communication platforms for teaching or management, such as teaching and research group discussion offices, teacher management training rooms, and so on. Through the dual guarantee of the school system and resources, leadership can be developed from an elective course for teachers to a compulsory course for teachers. It is worth emphasizing that schools should provide differentiated leadership development support tailored to teachers of different stages and backgrounds. For newly appointed teachers, emphasis should be placed on cultivating basic teaching leadership skills; For senior teachers, they should be encouraged to take on the role of mentors or mentors to cultivate new teachers. Provide different and fair resources to different teachers. So, Organizations should strive to select and cultivate leaders with inclusive traits. When formulating policies, inclusivity should be fully reflected, and an inclusive cultural atmosphere should be formed [9].

4.3. Student support strength

Students should support the leadership of Chinese middle school teachers from two aspects: timely feedback and communication, and self-regulation. Teachers should constantly stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, and incorporate various styles of education throughout teaching. They should use a variety of vivid and emotional materials to help students understand the textbook and integrate education with entertainment; Based on the characteristics of high school students' strong self-esteem, refusal to give up, and eagerness to learn and progress, it aim to create a fair and reasonable competitive atmosphere, stimulate students' enthusiasm, and meet their individual development needs [10]. Based on the above materials, middle school teachers need to improve themselves. Students should cooperate with teachers to adopt diverse teaching methods in the classroom, strive to regulate themselves, keep up with the times, and find timely feedback from teachers based on their own listening experience. For example, in the classroom, students can provide timely feedback to the teacher on their listening status through forms such as the "Answer Points Table". This interactive approach can not only help the teacher directly control the pace of the class, but also encourage students to actively participate in the innovative classroom changes made by the teacher, forming a process from "passive cooperation" to "active change". After class, students can use the "Classroom Feedback Form" to visually present their classroom experiences to the teacher and provide suggestions from the learner's perspective. This interactive approach allows the teacher to understand the different classroom experiences of different students and provide them with a better classroom experience in the next class, greatly improving the efficiency of teaching and listening for both teachers and classmates.

5. Conclusion

The theme of this study is to understand the development of educational leadership among Chinese middle school teachers by analyzing the core elements of cognitive and understanding aspects of educational leadership, as well as its current strengths and weaknesses, and to propose specific solutions based on specific problems. Research has found that the leadership of Chinese middle school teachers is still in the initial stage of development, and their leadership is going through a critical period from "personal awakening" to "system construction". Relevant educational innovation work is also stuck in a bottleneck period. These issues require different identities (such as students, teachers, and schools) to cooperate with different educational work to ensure the gradual development of teacher leadership. In the future, there is still a long way to go to achieve breakthroughs in the leadership of Chinese secondary school teachers' education. Only by continuously deepening the linkage between teachers, students, and schools can cultivate talents that are useful to the country. It hopes that the leadership of Chinese secondary school teachers will continue to deepen and become a major core weapon driving educational development.

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