

Research on the Leadership of Middleschool Teachers

Zhang Cheng, Zhang Tie Jun*

Faculty of Education and Humanities, UNITAR International University, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author Email: 446781991@qq.com

DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v15-i1/27455>

Published Online: 09 February 2026

Abstract

Leadership is a crucial quality, especially important for teachers. As guides for students, teachers need to possess certain leadership skills to lead and inspire them. Teacher leadership came with the professionalization of teachers in the United States in the 1980s. Afterwards, the school reconstruction movement, teacher empowerment and charter schools accelerated the development of teacher leadership. In recent years, letting teachers become professional leaders, empowering them, and improving their status and welfare have become the needs of education reform. Improving and developing the leadership ability of teachers will build a team of high-quality teachers and enhance teachers' sense of accomplishment, mission, and happiness.

Keywords: Middle School Teachers, Leadership, Teacher Leadership

Introduction

Teacher leadership is an important factor influencing teachers' daily teaching and education. Although more and more schools and teachers have recognized the importance of teacher leadership development and have attempted to enhance it through some measures, the effect of teacher leadership development is not ideal due to the lack of systematic planning and scientific implementation. For this purpose, this paper takes the middle school teachers of four middle schools in City M as the research objects. Through questionnaire surveys of 245 middle school teachers and interviews with relevant principals and teachers, it analyzes and studies the current situation, development and improvement strategies of middle school teachers' leadership. Surveys show that the overall leadership level of middle school teachers in City M is higher than the average level, but there are still many problems, specifically manifested as: insufficient foresight, the need to enhance personal charm, limited application of influence, lack of decision-making ability, and insufficient control ability. After an in-depth analysis of the reasons, the research proposes strategies for cultivating the leadership of middle school teachers: The education administrative department should take the lead in formulating a teacher leadership training plan, build a teacher leadership training and assessment platform, construct a three-in-one leadership training model of school, government and school, and incorporate teacher leadership into the teacher assessment system; Schools should promote innovative management, implement distributed leadership,

foster a culture of cooperation and trust, improve guarantee and incentive mechanisms, and enhance leadership training. Teachers need to enhance their leadership awareness and form mutual assistance teams among teachers.

Literature Review

The development of teacher leadership is affected by three aspects: the education administrative department, the school and the individual teacher. Cheung (2018) believes that the policy support of the local education department, the principal's concept of leadership power, the school's hierarchical management structure, teacher culture, teacher time and energy, teacher self-confidence and experience will all affect the development of leadership. Weatherhead (2024) believes that there are internal and external factors that affect the development of teacher leadership. Internal factors include teachers' personal professionalism and leadership ability, and external factors include the degree of empowerment of the principal, school organizational culture, colleague relations, school system, etc.

In terms of teachers' individual leadership qualities, Bond (2022) pointed out the need for teachers' leadership knowledge education, peer practice guidance, and teachers' autonomous learning to improve. Zheng (2023) suggested speeding up the development of teacher leadership training standards and introducing relevant leadership certification systems. Berg (2019) believes that based on accommodation courses, it is improved through pre-employment training and postemployment practice. In terms of policy support, Adams (2018) believes that government policy support and institutional guarantees should be strengthened to develop teacher leadership. By improving the training model, using the government system adjustment mechanism and guarantee mechanism, to give play to the leadership role of excellent teachers, and at the same time cooperate with universities to strengthen the leadership training for teachers, and at the same time start the early stage of leadership at the stage of teacher education nourish.

Develop teacher leadership by improving internal and external factors. From the perspective of personal ability, Li (2024) believes that teacher leaders will consciously improve their own quality. Therefore, as long as teachers' awareness of leadership is enhanced and teachers' drive is aroused, teachers will consciously improve the quality of leadership.

In recent years, with the rapid development of teacher leadership, domestic scholars have published a large number of research papers in this field. However, there are very few studies on teacher leadership in the middle school stage. Therefore, through data retrieval and analysis, this paper systematically sorts out the basic information of teacher leadership and its influencing factors, aiming to deeply explore the current situation and improvement suggestions of teacher leadership in middle schools in City M.

Methodology

Research Design

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is a survey of the basic situation of middle school teachers; the second part is a questionnaire on the leadership of middle school teachers, which includes teachers' Foresight, Charisma, Influence, Determination, and Control as the basis, and is made into a Likert scale. Designed an interview outline based on the

questionnaire. The interviewees in this study are ordinary teachers without administrative positions, teachers with administrative positions, and principals. This study took middle school teachers as the survey object and launched a questionnaire survey in four middle schools in CITY M. It aims to understand the leadership of middle school teachers in the district, discover the leadership problems of middle school teachers in the district, analyze the reasons, and then propose solutions.

Population and Sample

This article uses "Questionnaire Stars" to collect questionnaires. This study selected 4 middle schools in CITY M as survey subjects. A total of 251 questionnaires were successfully distributed online, with a confidence level of 97.6% and a maximum allowable error of 5%. Shorter questionnaires were excluded, and 245 valid questionnaires were obtained. It can be seen that in terms of gender, 39 male teachers, 206 female teachers. In terms of educational background, There are 206 teachers with a bachelor's degree, 29 and 5 teachers with a college degree and a postgraduate degree respectively, and 1 person with a college degree or less. This also shows that the CITY M middle school teachers as a whole have a bachelor's degree teacher.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.992$) and validity, with pilot test feedback confirming its robustness.

Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed online. Ethical approval was obtained, and responses were monitored for completeness.

Findings and Discussion

- (1) According to descriptive and frequency analysis, 25 teachers scored 59 points or lower, accounting for 10.2%. There are 60 teachers whose scores range from 60 to 85, accounting for 24.5%. A teacher who scored 18 points. The proportion of those scoring between 86 and 90 points is 6.9%. There were 142 teachers who scored over 90 points, accounting for 58%. This indicates that more than half of the middle school teachers in this region have leadership skills at the intermediate level or above, but approximately 33% of the teachers are still below the intermediate level. Overall, the leadership level of middle school teachers in this district is above average.
- (2) The average score of this personal charm test for middle school teachers, calculated on a 100-point scale, reached 87.18 points. The specific distribution is as follows: There are 25 teachers with scores of 59 or below (accounting for 10.20%), 53 teachers with scores between 60 and 85 (21.63%), and only 9 teachers with scores between 86 and 90 (3.67%). There are as many as 158 teachers with scores above 90, accounting for as high as 64.49%. It can be seen from this that although the personal charm of most teachers is excellent, nearly one-third of middle school teachers are still at a medium or even low level
- (3) The survey found that 91.4% of the teachers are familiar with educational theories and can apply them in practice, and 91.8% of the teachers feel at ease and confident in their work. In addition, 91.9% of the teachers continuously accumulate experience and learn new skills in their work. However, some teachers, despite having lofty educational ideals and enthusiasm for work, lack the willingness to take on challenges

- (4) In terms of teachers' forward-looking level, thirty teachers scored less than 59 points, accounting for 12.24%. A total of 88 teachers scored between 60 and 85 points, accounting for 35.92%. Thirty-four teachers scored between 86 and 90 points, accounting for 13.88%. A total of 93 teachers scored above 90 points, accounting for 37.96%. Data shows that about half of the middle school teachers have a forward-looking level above the intermediate level, while the other half have a forward-looking level below the intermediate level. Moreover, more than 10% of the teachers have a poor forward-looking level. Overall, the forward-looking level of the teachers at CITYM Middle School is at a medium level.
- (5) For middle school teachers, most of them can pay attention to the development of education, fully understand the educational characteristics, development concepts and shortcomings of their schools, and be able to set development goals for students, as well as understand the development needs and laws of the education industry. About 40% of the teachers are very certain that they can offer suggestions for the development of the school, while about 20% of the teachers think it is difficult to do so.
- (6) The survey found that nearly 90% of middle school teachers in the region performed well in terms of influence. The majority of teachers had an influence level above average, while about one-third had an influence level below average or even lower. However, when actively understanding students' development motivations and differences of opinion with others, there were still problems in balancing the interests of all parties and exerting coordination abilities.
- (7) Surveys show that over 90% of middle school teachers perform well in all dimensions such as determination, planning, execution and evaluation, but they still have deficiencies in risk prediction, handling of unexpected incidents in the classroom and their ability to make timely judgments when facing various decisions. Moreover, visionary leadership performs the worst. Its prominent issue lies in the insufficient ability to offer suggestions to schools or principals, that is, teachers lack the enthusiasm to participate in school decision-making. It can be seen from the interviews that some teachers lack a say in the school and have a low level of participation. Even if suggestions are put forward, they do not receive sufficient attention. Over time, the suggestion gradually became a mere formality. This also reflects the limited influence of the teacher group.
- (8) The limitations of the influence of middle school teachers mainly lie in their insufficient understanding of students' needs. Through interviews, it was found that due to the limited time and energy of teachers, although they have many ways to understand students, they still lack a deep understanding of each student.
- (9) Through investigation it was found most teachers would seek help from experienced teachers when encountering emergencies, appearing at a loss and lacking in emergency awareness and ability.
- (10) However, the school administrators' understanding of democratic management is still insufficient. In terms of the attitude towards the participation of ordinary teachers in decision-making, although the school leadership is very much looking forward to the democratic participation of teachers and their suggestions for the school's development, they often act on their own will when making actual decisions. This one-sided understanding of democracy seriously hinders the development of teachers' leadership.
- (11) Through investigation, it is found that the current teacher training model lacks innovation and mostly remains at the level of explaining theoretical knowledge, lacking practicality. There are problems of fragmentation and lack of systematicness in teacher leadership

training, and no systematic training has been carried out around the theme of teacher leadership.

Conclusion

This article conducts an in-depth investigation into the current situation of leadership among middle school teachers, sorts out the existing problems and analyzes their causes. Through analysis, it is found that there are several problems: The problem of charismatic leadership is reflected in teachers' lack of firm belief and decline in enthusiasm; The problem of visionary leadership lies in the insufficient ability to offer constructive suggestions. The influence issues faced by schools are insufficient to understand the needs of students. Meanwhile, the suggestions of ordinary teachers often fail to be recognized and effectively implemented. The difficulty in decision-making lies in being at a loss when encountering unexpected situations, and it is necessary to predict risks in advance and make preparations. The difficulty in control is reflected in the inability to effectively avoid and resolve conflicts when dealing with interpersonal relationships. Therefore, for the leadership cultivation of teachers in CITY M Middle School, the education administrative department needs to strengthen external support: formulate special leadership training plans, build training and evaluation platforms, implement the joint education model of schools, governments and academia, incorporate leadership into the teacher assessment system, etc. Schools need to provide internal support: boldly promote distributed leadership, actively foster a cooperative and shared organizational culture, improve the guarantee and incentive measures for teacher leadership, and develop targeted teacher leadership training programs for innovative management. Teachers need to update their own concepts.

References

- Cheung, R., Reinhardt, T., Stone, E., & Little, J. (2018). Defining teacher leadership. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(4), 38–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721718808263>
- Weatherhead, A. (2024). The power of teacher leadership. *Science and Children*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00368148.2024.2340802>
- Bond, N. (2022). Teacher leadership and professional organizations. In N. Bond (Ed.), *The power of teacher leaders*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003123972-9>
- Frost, D. (2019). Teacher leadership and professionalism. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.778>
- Kamaruzaman, N. L., Musa, K., & Hashim, Z. (2020). Teacher leadership: Concept and framework. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v9-i2/7628>
- Zheng, H. (2023). The importance and strategy of developing teacher leadership capabilities. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/26/20230873>
- Berg, J., Horn, P., Supovitz, J., & Margolis, J. (2019). Typology of teacher leadership programs. Unpublished Report.
- Adams, D., Samat, S. N. A., & Abu Samah, H. (2018). Teacher leadership: Going beyond classroom. *International Online Journal of Educational Leadership*, 2(1), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.22452/iojel.vol2no1.1>
- Li, X. (2024). Improvement of job satisfaction based on teacher leadership. *International Journal of New Developments in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.25236/ijnde.2024.060409>

Walker, M. (2021). Teacher leadership in professional development schools. *Teacher Development*, 25(3), 389–392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2021.1918861>