

Research on the Connotation, Characteristics, and Promotion Path of Teacher Leadership in Higher Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: In vocational education, teacher leadership is an important factor in promoting school development and improving teaching quality. Enhancing teacher leadership has practical significance for the connotative development of vocational colleges. It involves improving education and teaching quality, cultivating high-skilled talents, building excellent teaching teams, enhancing school governance systems, and other areas. The core elements include professional knowledge, teaching innovation, teamwork, and communication skills. The enhancement of teacher leadership can effectively enhance teachers' enthusiasm to participate in educational and teaching reforms as well as promote the overall efficiency of vocational colleges. In order to enhance teacher leadership in vocational colleges, it is necessary to achieve a breakthrough in institutional barriers, combine personal and external factors, strengthen institutionalized teacher leadership construction through a top-down design, and strengthen evaluation and feedback mechanisms to establish a scientific leadership evaluation system and improve teacher leadership cognition.

Keywords: Vocational college teachers; Leadership; Connotation; Characteristics; Promotion path

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1. Introduction

Theoretical research on teacher leadership in the international community has undergone three stages from the personal behavior of teacher leaders to teaching ability, and finally a shift in perspective. The earliest concept of "teacher leadership" originated in the 1980s from primary and secondary school research in the United States to highlight the professional influence of teachers and their status as the main body. Since the beginning of this century, the hotspots of research on teacher leadership in Chinese vocational colleges are on the professional development of teachers, distributed leadership, the impact of leadership, teaching reform, student achievement, teacher inheritance, *etc.* In the context of improving vocational education and the training system as well as achieving the internal development of higher vocational education, whether it is deepening education and teaching reform, strengthening application technology research and development, cultivating high-quality innovative and technical talents, or promoting the integration of industry and education, school-enterprise cooperation, and the combination of work and study to enhance the coordinated development of vocational colleges with regions and industries, it is necessary to give full play to the leadership of vocational college teachers. Therefore, clarifying the basic connotations of teacher leadership in vocational colleges and the characteristics of teacher leadership, analyzing the challenges that

may be encountered in cultivating teacher leadership in vocational colleges, and exploring the development path of teacher leadership have important academic value and practical significance.

2. Concept and significance of teacher leadership

Teacher leadership refers to the ability of teachers to motivate, inspire, and influence other teachers, students, and educational professionals in achieving the educational goals set by the school and to play a leadership and promoting role in educational activities. Teacher leadership includes ideological leadership, teaching leadership, organizational leadership, emotional leadership, and innovative leadership. Teacher leadership is a necessary condition for guiding students and teachers, as well as an important guarantee for the development of schools.

Teacher leadership is of great significance in modern vocational education. Firstly, it can improve the quality of education by promoting the improvement of teachers' professional quality in higher vocational colleges and strengthening communication between teachers and students. Secondly, it can promote students' growth by stimulating the interest and enthusiasm of students for learning, promoting the improvement of students' comprehensive quality, and guiding students' career planning and career development. Last but not least, teacher leadership can further enhance the cohesion of the school and cultivate high-quality applied talents. In higher vocational colleges, it can promote the cohesion and teamwork spirit of the teaching team and improve the overall competitiveness and development of the school.

3. Connotation and characteristics of teacher leadership in higher vocational colleges

Higher vocational college teachers embody the characteristics of leadership by playing multiple roles in promoting the development of the school during the educational and teaching process.

3.1. Education sentiment is the cornerstone of leadership for vocational college teachers

As the main implementers of vocational education in school management, teaching design, and student guidance, higher vocational education teachers play important roles. The goal of higher vocational education is to cultivate applied talents. The cultivation of applied talents requires teachers to have a high degree of educational sentiment to provide guidance and support for students' future career planning and development. Teachers also need to have a sense of responsibility for education and show care and support to students. In terms of teaching management, higher vocational education teachers need to coordinate the management and teaching aspects, not only to meet the school's requirements for curriculum, but also to pay attention to personalized teaching management for students, providing more intimate services for students. In terms of teaching design, higher vocational education teachers need to focus on innovating the curriculum content, teaching methods, and teaching practices on the basis of prescribed teaching standards to improve students' academic and employment capabilities. In terms of student guidance, higher vocational education teachers need to pay attention to students' physical and mental health, explore and discover students' talents and potential, guide students to actively expand their interests and professional directions, and provide help and useful guidance for students' learning, growth, and development, contributing ideas and suggestions to the development of higher vocational education.

3.2. Professional knowledge is an important component of leadership for vocational college teachers

Teachers need to have solid subject knowledge, updated teaching methods, subject content, and the latest research results. In the teaching process, leaders need to have comprehensive and profound theoretical knowledge and translate it into practical experience to provide high-quality teaching and guidance to students. In addition, teachers need to continuously learn and update their educational ideas and methods,

master new technologies and tools, as well as improve their teaching level and professional quality.

3.3. Teaching innovation is the key to leadership for vocational college teachers

Teachers need to constantly innovate teaching goals, contents, and methods to improve teaching effectiveness and quality, continuously challenge the traditional educational models, cultivate students' innovative awareness and practical skills, and help students tap into their potential. In addition, teachers need to conduct scientific research and educational reforms to promote educational innovation and development.

3.4. Teamwork and communication skills are essential qualities of leadership for vocational college teachers

Teachers need to have a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration as well as good communication skills and interpersonal skills to effectively communicate with students, colleagues, and parents. They also need to actively participate in school and subject team building and development. The collaborative spirit and teamwork of teachers will help improve the overall competitiveness and influence of the school.

4. Forming teaching beliefs and personality is the key to enhancing the leadership of vocational college teachers

The essence of teacher leadership is the influence that teachers have within a certain scope. The key to enhancing teacher leadership is to develop one's own teaching personality and philosophy. Professor Yu once pointed out that in order for teachers to exert professional influence, they must rely on their own individual and professional academic accomplishments, which are embodied in their teaching philosophy. A teacher's teaching philosophy not only reflects his/her unique teaching ideas and theories, but also embodies the teacher's professional maturity level in teaching, thus representing the teacher's lifelong professional achievements.

4.1. Breaking the shackles of institutional barriers and widely promoting the concept of teacher leadership development

The management system of vocational colleges is relatively rigid, and teachers have limited room for development. It is necessary to develop more flexible teaching management systems to provide teachers with broader development opportunities. In addition, for teachers who have doubts about institutional rigidity, they need to be trained to think independently and be innovative; in addition, they need to improve their organizational coordination, decision-making, and teamwork skills, so that they can become educational workers who can cope with and innovate under high-pressure situations, thus fully tapping into each of their potential and constantly enhancing their leadership.

Secondly, widely promoting the concept of teacher leadership development is also an important measure to enhance the leadership of vocational college teachers. The education department needs to widely publicize the concept of teacher leadership, encourage teachers to actively participate in various trainings and seminars, as well as improve their self-awareness and leadership qualities. There is a need for the higher education management department to further promote and popularize modern educational management concepts and methods through professional associations, subject research activities, as well as education and training channels, so that more teachers can understand and familiarize themselves with the field of educational management, as well as integrate these concepts into teaching practices. Parents, students, and the general public should also recognize the importance of teacher leadership and actively support the enhancement of the leadership of vocational college teachers, thereby jointly promoting educational development.

The enhancement of vocational college teachers' leadership requires breaking institutional barriers, widely promoting the concept of teacher leadership development, and translating them into concrete teaching philosophy and personality in practice. Only in this way can our teachers effectively exert leadership in teaching and promote the development and progress of vocational education.

4.2. Combining personal and external factors and continuously improving teachers' leadership abilities

Personal factors refer to teachers' intrinsic qualities, experiences, and awareness, while external factors refer to external resources, such as training, education, and other resources.

In the process of improving teachers' leadership skills, teachers themselves need to continuously enhance their personal factors by understanding themselves better and improving their personal qualities. This process of self-awareness should include reflection and re-understanding of their abilities, values, and career planning. At the same time, teachers should actively participate in various training and educational activities, continuously expand their knowledge, and master various teaching methods and skills.

In addition to personal factors, teachers also need to combine their personality traits and advantages with their teaching beliefs based on teaching practice, continuously practice, and reflect in order to better improve their leadership skills. Through analyses and summaries of teaching practices, teachers can make use of teaching methods and leadership styles that are suitable for them and thus better exert their personal traits and advantages.

By comparing different teaching beliefs and leadership styles, teachers should also continuously learn from the characteristics and methods of senior leaders to consolidate their advantages and improve their leadership skills. Therefore, the improvement of teachers' leadership skills requires the combination of personal and external factors, continuous self-reflection, improvement of knowledge level, and exertion of personal traits and advantages.

4.3. Strengthening the institutionalized construction of teacher leadership through a top-down design and ensuring smooth implementation of leadership

In terms of leadership improvement, vocational colleges should focus on institutionalization, standardization, and scientific approaches; continuously improve the integration of leadership and curriculum teaching; establish effective leadership evaluation mechanisms; and maximize the creativity and leadership of teachers.

On the one hand, vocational colleges should formulate reasonable plans for teacher leadership improvement from a top-down design perspective, establish evaluation standards and systems for teacher leadership, guide teachers to clarify their subject directions and strengths, develop better curriculum content and design, and also pay attention to the cultivation of abilities, such as courseware preparation and expression, to assist teachers in implementing leadership concepts.

On the other hand, vocational colleges should strengthen the effectiveness and measurability of leadership implementation, improve teaching management systems, establish assessment mechanisms for teacher leadership, as well as evaluate and standardize innovative education, lectures, and courses on leadership. At the same time, the teaching management department should pay attention to the growth and evaluation of teacher leadership, as well as the planning, implementation, and feedback of leadership development and implementation activities.

Strengthening the institutionalized construction of teacher leadership through a top-down design and ensuring smooth implementation of leadership demonstrates that vocational colleges need to adhere to the starting point of leading; plan and coordinate the improvement of teacher leadership from a global perspective; divide the connotation of teacher leadership into multiple dimensions, such as planning,

innovation, and communication; emphasize curriculum teaching as the foundation; establish corresponding leadership evaluation standards and evaluation mechanisms; as well as provide effective talent support and guarantee for the future development of colleges.

4.4. Strengthening evaluation and feedback, and guiding the positive development of teacher leadership through incentive mechanisms

Through regular evaluation and feedback on teachers' teaching, research, and other aspects, it is possible to identify problems and provide targeted guidance and help in a timely manner, thus enabling teachers to better improve their leadership skills. At the same time, by strengthening evaluation and feedback, it is possible to stimulate teachers' self-reflection and self-management awareness, thus promoting continuous improvement in their teaching.

In addition, guiding the positive development of teacher leadership through incentive mechanisms is also crucial. Vocational colleges can use various incentive measures, such as selecting outstanding teachers, establishing promotion channels, and providing professional development support to motivate teachers to fulfill their responsibilities seriously, as well as to improve their own quality and abilities. These incentive measures will not only enhance teachers' work enthusiasm and initiative, but also stimulate their passion and sense of responsibility toward their work, thus enabling them to exert their leadership skills.

Strengthening evaluation and feedback and guiding the positive development of teacher leadership through incentive mechanisms are the keys to improving teacher leadership in vocational colleges. Vocational colleges should use various means to achieve these goals and promote the comprehensive improvement and development of teacher leadership.

5. Conclusion

Forming one's teaching philosophy and individual teaching style is crucial to enhancing leadership. For teachers, the essence of teacher leadership is their influence within a certain scope. In order to enhance their leadership, teachers must rely on their professional academic achievements, which are reflected in their teaching philosophy. There is also a need to achieve a breakthrough in institutional barriers and widely establish the concept of teacher leadership development. Both personal and external factors need to be combined to continuously improve teacher leadership skills. Additionally, a top-down design is required to strengthen the institutionalization of teacher leadership, ensuring the smooth implementation of leadership. Lastly, strengthening evaluation and feedback mechanisms and guiding teacher leadership through incentive mechanisms can positively promote the development of teacher leadership.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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