

How to Improve School Leadership (in Beijing's High Schools)

Anqi Zuo *

The School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester, Greater Manchester, M13 9PL, UK

* Corresponding author Email: 1174831588@qq.com

Abstract: Educational leadership plays a crucial role in the academic performance and direction of students' education. Currently, schools in Beijing are prioritizing the impact of educational leadership. This paper contributes to the author's scholarly research, synthesizing various factors that affect educational leadership in Beijing schools. The paper is structured into four parts. Firstly, it presents the background and current developments regarding the research topic. Secondly, the methodology section outlines the scope of literature search and the search method employed in this paper. The main part of the literature review provides a critical reflection and narrative analysis of the influencing factors on educational leadership in Beijing schools. The paper analyses five key topics related to educational leadership in Beijing's high school education system. These topics are Changes in the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders, Collaboration and Partnership in Educational Leadership, Distributed Leadership, Instructional and Transformational Leadership, Practical Training for school leaders, finally draws conclusions so that future research can further explore how to enhance and improve educational leadership in Beijing's high school education system.

Keywords: Educational Instructors; Educational Leadership; Education System; Leadership; School Leaders; School Leadership.

1. Introduction

Education leadership has risen to the top of global education agendas because it is essential to improving school results. Leadership affects teachers' motivations and skills, as well as the environment and culture of the school. Because of this, good school leadership is essential for making education more effective and fairer. Currently, a group of school administrators is getting ready to retire, and finding new ones is getting harder and harder. Applicants are discouraged from applying because the jobs are too hard, there is not enough preparation and Training, there are not enough career opportunities, and the support and pay are not good enough. Because of these changes, school leadership is now a top priority in education. It is essential to improve educational Leadership and make sure it will last. Yukl says that the definition of Leadership is arbitrary and highly subjective because some definitions are more helpful than others, but none are correct. He says that educational Leadership is a concept Whose meaning varies from person to person (2002). Furthermore, because Leadership is so critical to school effectiveness (Daresh,1998) and school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 1999), we need to come up with at least a working definition for this complex idea. So, educational Leadership is a part of educational administration, which is a field that focuses on how educational organizations are run and managed. Educational Leadership is a part of educational administration (Bush, 1999; Ballo, 2020).

2. Approach

There are 21 sources for this paper, and all 21 are used to explain and expand on different themes. Out of the 21 papers, 12 were found in the school e-library site and are not only peer-reviewed but also from a credible academic site. Also, five sources were derived from the google scholar database, a

peer-reviewed, and global e-library. The rest of the four sources were derived from specific keywords. Some keywords used in the school e-library, google scholar, and general search include Educational Leadership, Leadership, education system, school leadership, school leaders, educational instructors, current themes in education instruction, and education leadership.

I first used the selection criteria by reading the journal's abstract that was produced by the keywords. For by reading the abstract, I was able to grasp the content of the journal and know if it is going to help me or not. If the journal is helpful in my research, I would go ahead and index it and continue the search. Then when I had collected what I think are enough journals for the paper, I started sifting through by keenly reading each journal and capturing its key ideas. Then I grouped the critical ideas into themes and researched more to understand the current and key themes in educational Leadership. Following further research, I re-grouped the themes and came up, with the help of literature, with the key themes for my paper.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Changes to the Roles and Responsibilities of Educational Leaders

An analysis of current practices shows that school leaders are taking on a more extensive and broader range of responsibilities than the previous decades (Pont et al.,2008). This is because environments are becoming more decentralized and more focused on accountability. Most new duties undertaken by school leaders have a clarity of role and responsibilities, leading to stress and uncertainty. At the same time, educational leadership frameworks do not focus on improving educational Leadership but instead on traditional duties that are bureaucratic.

The improvement of educational Leadership is highly dependent on the setting out of clear roles and responsibilities for school leaders. When figuring out a school leader's responsibilities, knowing what kinds of Leadership are best for improving teaching and learning is essential. Moreover, giving educational leaders more freedom while giving them the right amount of help. Even though international tests like the PISA seem to show a link between school autonomy and better learning (Verger et al., 2019), school autonomy alone does not guarantee that a school will get better (Suggett, 2015). If school leaders do not have the necessary knowledge, skills, and support to use their freedom to do things that are best for learning, school autonomy may not have much of an effect on how well students learn. Hence to aid better educational outcomes, educational Leadership needs to clarify and set the roles and responsibilities of school leaders.

3.2. Collaboration and Partnership in Educational Leadership

Collaboration with outside partners is a new aspect of Leadership that is becoming more and more recognized as a clear role for school leaders since it will help the whole school system, not just the students of one school. School leaders must be given opportunities to partner and collaborate with other schools and the local community to improve student outcomes and curriculum alignment at the local level (Armstrong, 2015). And as school leaders now have more responsibilities and are held more accountable, they need to be spread roles and responsibilities both within and between schools. Staff members need to share more responsibilities with other school professionals and school board members.

The education system stakeholders think sharing responsibilities is essential for school leadership (Armstrong, 2015). Yet collaboration and partnership practices are rare and unclear. Individuals conducting the roles and responsibilities are not acknowledged and recognized as part of educational Leadership (Tobin, 2014). Hence it is vital to broadening the idea of educational Leadership and the working frameworks to embrace Partnership and collaboration.

3.3. Distributed Leadership

Research shows that distributed Leadership happens when a group or network of people work together (Van et al., 2009). A recent study of how distributed Leadership works in the real world suggests that the best way to understand distributed Leadership is a practice that includes activities of more than one group of people (Spillane, 2006). Even though there is not much systematic evidence about how distributed leadership patterns affect organizational goals, much evidence shows a link between distributed leadership patterns and organizational performance (Harris, 2004; Fitzgerald et al., 2013). Moreover, literature on school improvement has always talked about how important it is for teachers to be involved in decision-making. Professional solid relationships contribute to positive leadership improvement, which trickles down to the students. Hence giving leadership roles to people other than the principal is essential for the building and maintaining strong professional learning communities (Day et al., 2020).

However, Harris notes that Distributed Leadership has significant structural, cultural, and micro-political barriers exist in schools and make it hard to implement distributed forms of Leadership (2004). Challenges tend to emerge when

there is a sharing of power due to its threat to formal power positions. Schools are rigid within the top-down reaches. A study on evaluating teachers concludes that the challenges to leadership distribution were found to be hierarchical norms, the expectations and attitudes of district leaders, the difficulties of evaluation, and the lack of clarity around the evaluation process (Goldstein, 2004).

3.4. Instructional and Transformational Leadership

Research shows that combining concepts and strategies within the education system results in better outcomes due to the cancellation of weaknesses in each concept. Studies have shown that transformational Leadership is one thing that helps bring about change in education (Atalay, 2020). The transformational leader changes the school's culture to match the changes in education and involves modeling, supporting, encouraging, and working together to change the school culture so that it is more open to innovation and change. At the same time, schools must keep up with the changing times for principals to show instructional leadership behaviors. A person with a clear goal and a deep understanding of how schools work and how people learn is called an instructional leader (McEwan, 1994). Instructional Leadership offers that the core place for a school manager is not the big office but the classroom, garden, bathroom, and hallways. This gives school management a new way to look at things. As a leader, school principals should be careful to act correctly. When teachers see principals acting in the right way as instructional leaders, their commitment, professional engagement, and desire to try new things all go up and instructional Leadership moves in a way toward being transformational Leadership within a combination of both leadership styles (Marks & Printy, 2003).

3.5. Practical Training for School Leaders

Research shows a need for specialized school leadership training to manage the increased and varied roles and responsibilities of school leadership (Pont et al., 2008). Educational Leadership is hinged on gaining the necessary academic qualifications and rising through the education system ranks. Moreover, that does not necessarily mean that the school leader has the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience to lead a school (Huber, 2004). School leadership is a job that demands not only specific capabilities and knowledge but also for the continuous development of knowledge and skills due to the ever-changing dynamics of the school environment and system.

According to Pont et al., educational leadership training development strategies are not capturing the needs of the educational system. Hence training programs must also be based on need analysis and factors in the environment that affect practice and training support (2008). This means ensuring targeted Training for specific needs, such as noting that schools in low-income areas cannot access resources for professional development. Also, Leadership development must be seen as something you do for the rest of the school's leaders' life. Most of the evidence on the effects of leadership development shows that leadership development is a concept that can be learned within any setting in various situations and stages of life (Kjellström et al., 2020). Hence, a school leader's career must be continuously supported through effective induction and in-service Training (Pont et al., 2008). Moreover, the professional development must be consistent

with the goals, and the length must fit all other growth opportunities.

Leadership in schools has many different training needs, which several providers can meet. Also, leadership training is a requirement for practice as it can help improve the quality of schools by making the role more professional. Moreover, including educational Leadership in teacher training will encourage teachers-in-training to start thinking about their leadership capabilities, abilities, and contributions (Pont et al., 2008). Also, the incentives for educational leadership training should be set up to encourage participation and high-quality Training. Moreover, it is vital to have clear and transparent standards to ensure that educational professional development trainers and learners prioritize good practices.

4. Conclusion

One of the main strengths of the current research is the availability of empirical research on educational Leadership as a concept and framework. The paper uses 15 empirical research studies to frame its literature review themes as empirical research is dependable and represents real-life experiences and not just theoretical concepts.

Another strength of the current research is that it is replicable, allowing another researcher to evaluate the findings. Also, if a study can be replicated, it means that it is a credible study. Also, the current research is transparent as it offers comprehensive data collection, analysis, and conclusion details.

However, one of the weaknesses of the significant research is that educational Leadership is a rapidly changing concept, given the nature of changes occurring in the educational system. Hence it is harder to find material that critically captures the evolving nature of Leadership in education. However, the availability of literature materials majority of the literature has duplicated findings which is a significant weakness.

There are several gaps found in the literature. One of the gaps is the lack of a clear, consistent, and critical definition of educational Leadership. The lack of definition makes it harder for the topic to be critically addressed. Also, there seems to be a lack of theoretical frameworks for educational Leadership, which implicates the topic under study as theory guides research development.

The paper calls for future research into the definition and theoretical frameworks of educational Leadership embedded in the culture and traditions of different school leaders. Also, research into how technology affects and implicates educational leadership improvement is a concern for the educational systems that are increasingly using technology in various capacities. Hence how technology is and can affect educational Leadership is a critical study that needs to be undertaken.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my esteemed supervisor--Dr. Catherine Atkinson for all their help and advice with this paper. My appreciation also goes out to my family and friends for their encouragement and support all through my studies.

References

- [1] Daresh, J.C., 1998. Professional development for school leadership: The impact of US educational reform. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 29(4), pp.323-333.
- [2] Heck, R.H. and Hallinger, P., 1999. Next generation methods for the study of Leadership and school improvement. *Handbook of research on educational administration*, 2(1), pp.141- 162.
- [3] Bush, T., 1999. Crisis or crossroads? The discipline of educational management in the late 1990s. *Educational management & administration*, 27(3), pp.239-252.
- [4] Ballo, A., 2020. What might educational Leadership mean in 21st century.
- [5] Pont, B., Moorman, H. and Nusche, D., 2008. *Improving school leadership* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-199). Paris: OECD.
- [6] Verger, A., Fontdevila, C. and Parcerisa, L., 2019. Constructing school autonomy with accountability as a global policy model: A focus on OECD's governance mechanisms. In *The OECD's Historical Rise in Education* (pp. 219-243). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- [7] Martin, J.L., 2012. Perceived dominant group exclusion and resistance: a look at potential leadership remedies (Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia).
- [8] Suggett, D., 2015. School autonomy: Necessary but not sufficient. *Evidence base: a journal of evidence reviews in key policy areas*, (1), pp.1-33.
- [9] Armstrong, P., 2015. Effective school partnerships and collaboration for school improvement: A review of the evidence.
- [10] Tobin, J., 2014. Management and Leadership Issues for School Building Leaders. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 9(1), p.n1.
- [11] Van Ameijde, J.D., Nelson, P.C., Billsberry, J. and Van Meurs, N., 2009. Improving Leadership in higher education institutions: A distributed perspective. *Higher Education*, 58(6), pp.763-779.
- [12] Spillane, J.P., 2006. Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. In *Rethinking schooling* (pp. 208-242). Routledge.
- [13] Harris, A., 2004. Distributed Leadership and school improvement: leading or misleading? *Educational management administration & Leadership*, 32(1), pp.11-24.
- [14] Fitzgerald, L., Ferlie, E., McGivern, G. and Buchanan, D., 2013. Distributed leadership patterns and service improvement: Evidence and argument from English healthcare. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24(1), pp.227-239.
- [15] Day, C., Sammons, P. and Gorgen, K., 2020. *Successful School Leadership*. Education development trust.
- [16] Goldstein, J., 2004. Making sense of distributed Leadership: The case of peer assistance and review. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, 26(2), pp.173- 197.
- [17] Atalay, D., THE PLACE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION.
- [18] McEwan, E.K., 2002. *Seven steps to effective instructional Leadership*. Corwin Press.
- [19] Marks, H.M. and Printy, S.M., 2003. Principal Leadership and school performance: An integration of transformational and instructional Leadership. *Educational administration quarterly*, 39(3), pp.370-397.
- [20] Huber, S.G., 2004. *Preparing school leaders for the 21st century*. CRC Press.
- [21] Kjellström, S., Stålné, K. and Törnblom, O., 2020. Six ways of understanding leadership development: An exploration of increasing complexity. *Leadership*, 16(4), pp.434-460.