

CONSTRUCTION OF TEACHER LEADERSHIP IDENTITY AT LUANPING
MIDDLE SCHOOL, HEBEI PROVINCE, CHINA

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DEDICATION

This project report is dedicated to my father, who taught me that the best kind of knowledge to have is that which is learned for its own sake. It is also dedicated to my mother, who taught me that even the largest task can be accomplished if it is done one step at a time.

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ABSTRACT

Teacher leadership has been studied extensively, yet there is no universally recognised concept or practice. Uncertainty over best practices is likely to persist until a uniform definition is established for a local context. The purpose of this study is to investigate the construction of teacher leadership identity at Luanping Middle School, Hebei province, China. In this study, a qualitative approach is applied to explore and understand teacher leadership in Luanping Middle School, Hebei Province, China. It is a public boarding school with about five thousand students and three hundred teachers. A majority of the students live on campus. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a group of seven teachers. It was found that in general, the respondents perceive themselves as teacher leaders. Personal attributes, student-focused, collegiality, development focus, as well as leading and being led by others are important attributes in supporting teacher leadership. The culture in Luanping Middle School greatly supported the development of teacher leadership among the teachers. The respondents were able to identify their strengths and weaknesses in their journey as a teacher, and were keen to be actively involved in the development and well-being of their students. The teachers' leadership roles are also diverse. Local middle schools will have a systematic guidance on how to prepare and grow teacher leaders once a definition is established. A suggestion for schools looking to produce teacher leaders is to clarify what teacher leadership means in their own environment until a common definition emerges.

ABSTRAK

Kepemimpinan guru telah dipelajari secara meluas, namun tidak ada konsep atau praktik yang diakui secara universal. Ketidakpastian terhadap amalan terbaik mungkin berterusan sehingga definisi yang seragam dibuat bagi sesebuah konteks tempatan. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji pembinaan identiti kepemimpinan guru di Sekolah Menengah Luanping, provinsi Hebei, China. Dalam kajian ini, pendekatan kualitatif diterapkan untuk meneroka dan memahami kepemimpinan guru di Sekolah Menengah Luanping, Provinsi Hebei, China. Sekolah ini merupakan sekolah berasrama penuh awam dengan kira-kira lima ribu pelajar dan tiga ratus guru. Sebilangan besar pelajar tinggal di kampus. Temu bual separa berstruktur dilakukan pada sekumpulan tujuh orang guru. Didapati bahawa secara umum, responden menganggap diri mereka sebagai pemimpin guru. Sifat peribadi, fokus terhadap pelajar, sifat kolejial, fokus terhadap pembangunan, memimpin dan dipimpin oleh orang lain adalah sifat penting dalam menyokong kepemimpinan guru. Budaya dalam budaya Sekolah Menengah Luanping sangat menyokong perkembangan kepemimpinan guru dalam kalangan guru. Responden dapat mengenal pasti kekuatan dan kelemahan mereka dalam perjalanan sebagai seorang guru, dan berminat untuk terlibat secara aktif dalam pembangunan dan kesejahteraan pelajar mereka. Terdapat kepelbagaian dalam peranan kepimpinan guru di sekolah tersebut. Sekolah menengah tempatan akan mempunyai panduan yang sistematik tentang bagaimana mempersiapkan dan mengembangkan pemimpin guru setelah definisi dibuat. Satu cadangan untuk sekolah yang ingin melahirkan pemimpin guru adalah menjelaskan apa yang dimaksudkan dengan kepemimpinan guru dalam persekitaran mereka sehingga definisi lazim muncul.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	i
	DEDICATION	ii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
	ABSTRACT	iv
	ABSTRAK	v
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
	LIST OF TABLES	ix
	LIST OF APPENDICES	x
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Statement of Problem	2
1.3	Research Objectives	3
1.4	Research Questions	3
1.5	Methodology	3
1.6	Operational Definition	4
	1.6.1 Teacher Leadership	4
	1.6.2 Teacher Leader	4
1.7	Significant of Study	4
1.8	Presentation of Chapters	5
1.9	Conclusion	5
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1	Introduction	6
2.2	What is Teacher Leadership	6
2.3	What are the Teacher Leadership Attributes	7
2.4	What are the Challenges in Teacher Leadership	8

2.5	Conceptual Framework for Teacher Leadership in China	10
2.6	Conclusion	12
CHAPTER 3	RESEARCH DESIGN	13
3.1	Introduction	13
3.2	Research Design	13
	3.2.1 Qualitative Research	13
	3.2.2 Case Study	14
3.3	Research Process	14
	3.3.1 Step 1: Establish protocol for semi-structured interview	14
	3.3.2 Step 2: Select school	16
	3.3.3 Step 3: Select participants	16
	3.3.4 Step 4: Conduct interview	16
	3.3.5 Step 5: Data Analysis	17
	3.3.6 Step 6: Presentation of findings	18
3.4	Conclusion	18
CHAPTER 4	RESULTS	19
4.1	Introduction	19
4.2	Participant Demography	19
4.3	Emerging Themes	20
	4.3.1 Teachers' daily routine	20
	4.3.2 Self-reflection	22
	4.3.3 Teacher Leadership Attributes	23
	4.3.3.1 Personal Attributes	24
	4.3.3.2 Student-focused	26
	4.3.3.3 Collegiality	29
	4.3.3.4 Development Focused	32
	4.3.3.5 Leading, and being Led by Others	33
4.4	Discussion	35
4.5	Conclusion	38

CHAPTER 5	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	39
5.1	Summary	39
5.2	Addressing Research Objective and Research Question	40
5.2.1	Research Objective	40
5.2.2	Research Question 1	40
5.2.3	Research Question 2	42
5.3	Contribution to Knowledge	42
5.4	Future Areas to Explore	43
5.5	Limitation of the Study	45
5.6	Conclusion	46
REFERENCES		48

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
Table 2.1	Teacher leadership attributes: Proposed	7
Table 2.2	Conceptual framework	11
Table 3.1	Interview questions	15
Table 4.1	Participant overview	19
Table 4.2	Teacher leadership attributes: Results	23
Table 4.3	Teacher leadership attributes compared with literature	36

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
Appendix A	Interview Guide	52
Appendix B	Interview Questionnaire	53
Appendix C	Consent Form	55

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Over the past ten years, China has rapidly introduced reforms to its education system. This trend requires a change in the role of teachers. Teacher leadership became an emerging concept for study in this country, with scholars developing instruments that specifically measures teacher leadership for the Chinese education system (Mo Wang and Jing Xia, 2020; and Chen Xie, Pingping Song and Huimin Hu, 2020). This is because previous studies have shown positive effects that teacher leadership can have on schools (Adams, Kutty and Zabidi, 2017; Jones, et. al., 2015; Harris, et. al., 2017; Perera, Adams, and Muniandy, 2015). When teaching activities are conducted and processed through effective teacher leadership, there is a marked improvement in student learning, consequently their academic performance (Wenner and Campbell, 2017).

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) defined teacher leadership as: “teachers who are leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice”. In fact, not every teacher can realise their own leadership and effectively apply it to daily teaching management. Teachers not only have the ability to lead, but also have the responsibility to develop their own leadership. The professional development of teachers emphasizes the development of individual personality and specialty of teachers and requires that the potential of individual teachers should be brought into full play. Therefore, exploring and developing teachers’ leadership is in line with teachers’ professional development, and can also increase teachers’ awareness of professional development and enhance their comprehensive ability to deal with problems in class and school.

Moreover, previous studies show that effective leaders exercise a powerful and indirect influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students (Leithwood et al, 1999). Although teaching quality has a strong influence on students' motivation and achievement level, it has long been believed that leadership quality determines teachers' motivation and classroom teaching quality (Fullan, 2001; Segiovanni, 2001). The development of teacher leadership not only increase teacher motivation, but also stimulate teachers' initiative of self-development and promote students' progress. At the same time, teacher leadership can also improve school efficiency and promote school development.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Luanping Middle School is located in Hebei Province, China. The school is a boarding school and the best public school in this county, with about five thousand students and three hundred teachers. A majority of the students live on campus.

In January 2017, the Ministry of Education China issued a notice on the key points of the work of the teacher, which put forward to cultivate a high-quality and innovative team of teachers, and strive to make the majority of teachers feel at ease, enthusiastic, comfortable and calm to engage in the cause of education. Teacher leadership plays an important role in promoting the realisation of this goal, which is not only conducive to mobilizing teachers' work enthusiasm, but also provides a new way of thinking for promoting research on teacher professional development. The need for teachers to innovate and improve teacher leadership has become a new requirement of the society's expectation of school effectiveness.

With the continuous education reform in China, the role of middle school teachers in Luanping County, the county where the researcher came from, becomes an interesting field of inquiry for investigation. How do middle school teachers in Luanping County view the concept of teacher leadership, and what are the attributes of teacher leadership perceived by these teachers?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To investigate the construction of teacher leadership identities among middle school teachers in Luanping country, Hebei Province, China

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated for the purpose of this study:

1.4.1 What do teachers in Luanping country do, on a daily basis, that facilitates them in developing their teacher leadership capabilities?

1.4.2 What are the attributes of teacher leadership among the teachers studied?

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The study undertakes a qualitative approach, using single case study as the research method. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a group of seven teachers from Luanping Middle School, Hebei Province, China. The study was carried out through the following steps:

Step 1: Establish protocol for semi-structured interview

Step 2: Select school

Step 3: Select participants

Step 4: Conduct interview

Step 5: Data analysis

Step 6: Presentation of findings

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

1.6.1 Teacher Leadership

York-Barr and Duke (2004) defined teacher leadership as “The process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement” (p. 287–288).

1.6.2 Teacher Leader

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) describe teacher leaders as “teachers who are leaders within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others toward improved educational practice” (p.9).

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This research discusses mainly on how middle school teachers in Luanping Country perceive teacher leadership as an important component in their professional development. Through this study, it is hoped that the professional development pathways of middle school teachers are reviewed, in order to integrate more programmes to develop teacher leadership throughout the year.

1.8 PRESENTATION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 (this chapter) provides an overview of the study. Chapter 2 outlines the literature review that guides the formation of conceptual framework for the study. Chapter 3 describes the research design and research process. Chapter 4 outlines findings from data analysis, and finally, Chapter 5 presents the overall summary of the study, and implications for future practice.

1.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the details of this study problem and research questions as well as research methodology were introduced. The next chapter presents the literature review essential for conceptual framework of this study.

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