

The Impact of Teacher Leadership on Classroom Culture Construction: The Role of the New Education Initiative

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Abstract: Classroom culture is of vital significance for the accomplishment of educational objectives. This study is an examination of the differences in the impact of teacher leadership on classroom culture construction between schools within and outside the New Education Initiative (NEI) network. Its research findings reveal that teachers at the NEI schools outperformed their counterparts at non-NEI schools in the seven dimensions of classroom culture construction. Other factors related to the teacher's performance in this regard is also discussed.

Best Evidence in Chinese Education 2025; 19(2):1937-1939
DOI: 10.15354/bece.25.ar146

How to Cite: Wang, M. (2025). The impact of teacher leadership on classroom culture construction: The role of the new education initiative. *Best Evidence in Chinese Education*, 2025, 19(2):1937-1939.

Keywords: Teacher Leadership, Classroom Culture, New Education Initiative

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Conflict of Interests: None

Funding: No funding sources declared.

AI Declaration: The author affirms that artificial intelligence did not contribute to the process of preparing the work.

Introduction

CLASSROOM culture, as a latent form of education, plays a crucial role in reaching the goals of education. The classroom's physical space and rules and norms, as well as dynamic elements like the teacher-student relationship, learning climate, and general ethos, can all manifest its culture. Teacher leadership has a significant impact on the construction of classroom culture. This study investigates the effects of teacher leadership on classroom culture in schools implementing the New Education Initiative (NEI) and those not within the NEI network.

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Research Methods

Using methods including the questionnaire survey, interview, and classroom observation, the study looks at the differences in classroom culture construction between NEI and non-NEI schools. The research subjects were grades 3-5 teachers from five regions across China: central, eastern, southern, western, and northern China. A questionnaire was designed to investigate the teachers' roles in classroom culture construction in seven dimensions: distinctive symbols, classroom environment creation, festival culture, spiritual guidance, learning outcomes representation, artefacts display, and cultural construction accomplishments. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed and 586 valid ones retrieved, including 201 from teachers at NEI schools and 385 from those at non-NEI schools. Software SPSS 24.0 was used to conduct descriptive statistics, T-tests, and correlation analysis to compare the differences in the performance in classroom culture construction between the two groups.



Research Findings

Teachers at NEI schools outperformed their counterparts at non-NEI schools in classroom culture construction in all the seven dimensions. In the dimension of distinctive symbols, teachers at NEI schools ($M= 4.41$, $SD= 0.95$) scored higher than those at non-NEI schools ($M= 3.70$, $SD= 1.27$), with statistical significance ($t= 7.62$, $p< 0.001$). The former scored significantly higher than the latter in the dimensions of festival culture ($t= 6.02$, $p< 0.001$) and spiritual guidance ($t = 3.65$, $p< 0.001$). In the dimension of cultural construction accomplishments, the former ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.97$) also had better performance than the latter ($M=3.81$, $SD=0.93$), with statistical significance ($t= 3.14$, $p< 0.05$). The overall score of the former ($M= 4.23$, $SD= 0.73$) is significantly higher than that of the latter ($M= 3.90$, $SD= 0.77$), with statistical significance ($t= 5.19$, $p<0.001$).

Factor like the education level, being a classroom teacher or not, and the school location could significantly affect the teacher's performance in classroom culture construction. Among teachers from NEI schools, those with a bachelor's degree performed better than their peers graduated from junior colleges. Being a classroom teacher was also an advantage in this regard. On average, urban schools outperformed their rural counterparts in each of the seven dimensions.

The correlation analysis reveals that professional attitudes, classroom activity design, and teaching strategies of the teacher were closely connected with the outcomes of classroom culture construction. This indicates that educational ideas and teaching behaviors of the teacher have a significant impact on classroom culture.

To sum up, the NEI program is effective in enhancing classroom culture through the teachers' leadership.

The Chinese version of this article has been published in Life Education, 2025; 2025(1), 80-89. The English version has been authorized for being publication in BECE by the author(s) and the Chinese journal.

汪敏 (2025). 教师领导力对教室文化建设的影响研究——以“新教育实验”为例. 生活教育, 2025(1), 80-89.

Received: January 20, 2025

Revised: February 20, 2025

Accepted: March 01, 2025