

Analysis of Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Distributed and Transformational Leadership in English Schools

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Abstract: Leadership acts as a catalyst for change and progress in many industries and environments. Leadership also plays an important role in the UK education system. Although school leadership has a small impact, it has a very significant effect on the characteristics of the school organisation, and the quality of teaching and learning is largely influenced by the characteristics of the school organisation. School leadership therefore has a very significant impact on the improvement and progression of teaching and learning in many schools. A number of leadership models have been widely implemented and utilised to improve the quality and outcomes of teaching and learning in the running and development of schools in England. Three of these models, namely instructional leadership, distributed leadership and systems leadership, have been widely implemented and are representative.

Keywords: Distributed Leadership, English Schools, Transformational Leadership.

1. Introduction

There are a number of internal and external factors that influence the implementation of these leadership approaches in schools in the UK. Internal factors include school culture, resource availability and teacher engagement. External factors include policy change, external evaluation and accountability, and the social environment. The aim of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of internal and external factors in influencing the development of distributed and transformational leadership in UK schools.

Distributed leadership refers to the phenomenon where leadership practices are distributed across individuals, specifically distributed leadership focuses on collective collaboration, where responsibility for school leadership is shared among middle managers, teachers, and students, rather than the headmaster or a small number of administrators taking decision-making authority (Spillane, 2005). Transformational leadership focuses on motivating, inspiring and empowering teams or organisations to achieve change goals and consists of four dimensions: Idealised Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Personality Care.

2. Research Aim

The main aim of this paper is to analyse what internal and external factors influence the development of distributed and transformational leadership in English schools. Effective factors are objectively analysed and identified by analysing a number of previous case studies in UK schools as well as research.

3. Analysis of Distributed Leadership

Firstly, according to Bolden (2011), the core principles of distributed leadership include shared responsibility: leadership tasks are divided according to individual interests and strengths. Secondly, teamwork: emphasises solving problems collectively. Flexibility: emphasises the need for

leadership roles to be adapted to different circumstances and goals.

Distributed leadership is becoming increasingly important in schools in the UK not only to increase teacher involvement in school management but also to improve pupil outcomes. In a primary school in the North of England, school managers used distributed leadership to address low teacher achievement and pupil underachievement. In the process, shared responsibility, teamwork, and greater teacher autonomy led to increased teacher engagement and higher student achievement in maths and reading (Hallinger, 2020).

On the one hand, distributed leadership is influenced by a number of internal factors in schools in the UK.

Firstly, the school culture is very important for the implementation of distributed leadership. Only when teachers feel valued and respected will they be more motivated to participate in the work of the school and take on leadership roles. In more authoritarian cultures where teachers feel negatively, distributed leadership is difficult to implement. By increasing teachers' sense of ownership and motivation, the quality of teaching and learning and the implementation of distributed leadership can be improved.

Secondly, the willingness and ability of teachers have a significant impact on the implementation of distributed leadership. Psychologically, school teachers must have sufficient psychological qualities and the intention to participate in school management activities, and professionally, teachers need to have excellent professional qualities to cope with the various problems in school management activities. Various training and exchanges of professional knowledge can help teachers to improve their leadership skills, and the formation of an atmosphere of mutual encouragement and help among teachers can help them to be more active in school management. According to Çakir and Özkan (2019), the three aspects of management support, professional development, and communication are significant contributors to the effective implementation of distributed leadership. Management support can be seen as a solid backing for teachers' participation in management,

professional development creates a platform for teachers to enhance their competencies, and communication is like a bridge that connects the various aspects.

In addition, communication mechanisms play a key role in the process of distributed leadership. School employees can only utilize their strengths and contribute effectively if they ensure that they can communicate effectively. Çakir and Özkan (2019) state that one of the important conditions for the development of distributed leadership is communication.

Finally, the level of support from school administrators also plays a crucial role in the success of implementing distributed leadership. The ability of the school management to delegate more authority to the teachers will help in the implementation of distributed leadership because the teachers are the ones who perform the actual activities. If the management is more specialized it will hinder the development of distributed leadership in the school. Therefore the support of managers is also an important factor in developing distributed leadership (Çakir and Özkan, 2019).

However, a variety of outside forces can stand on the way of the development of distributed leadership in the UK schools.

To elaborate, the policy environment is one of the huge factors that largely determines the degree of distributed leadership development. For instance, an influence of standardized testing in connection with school accountability on school leadership could be seen in the UK. Legislations such as multi-academy trusts, supportive of the innovation, encourage the progress of the distributed leadership. These are the major ones that contribute to the development of distributed leadership in schools. Mifsud (2023) notes that national policy changes can have a huge impact on the development of distributed leadership.

Moreover, the expectations of parents and the community members also have an important role in the development of distributed leadership in schools. Such high expectations will only be met through the collective effort of all teachers at hand. On the other hand, quite distinct views and attitudes are expressed when they desire improved standards of their environment. Börü (2020) shows that the principal plays a significant role in the progress of distributed leadership in addition to the teachers.

External assessment and accountability is also an influencing factor in the development of distributed leadership. In England, the way in which schools are led is influenced by Ofsted inspections and other accountability measures, and the areas of concern in these assessment criteria put pressure on schools to adopt a more centralized approach to leadership in order to ensure that they pass the assessment criteria. Distributed leadership can therefore be a strength of assessment when it leads to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Regional co-operative networks also have a strong influence on distributed leadership. Distributed leadership can be facilitated through collaboration with different schools, universities and some educational organisations. For example, some school federations and multi-academy trusts can enable teachers to learn from each other and provide better leadership knowledge and leadership opportunities.

A London secondary school was judged by Ofsted to be in need of improvement, indicating that the school had shortcomings in pupil attainment and the quality of teaching and learning and needed to take steps to improve. The school's managers implemented distributed leadership to optimise and

improve. The process began with the formation of leadership teams that were involved in the areas of quality of instruction, student achievement, and parent and community involvement. Secondly, through interdisciplinary collaboration, students' overall literacy is enhanced through teachers from different disciplines working with each other to develop interdisciplinary curricula. Finally, the school collaborates with local higher education institutions and a number of educational organisations to provide a variety of learning and exchange opportunities for the professional development of teachers, which can help the school's teachers to continually improve their professionalism. Results show that the school's Ofsted rating has improved to 'good' after one year and the school has a number of cross-curricular programmes that are well regarded by parents. Pupils' attainment was also steadily improving (Harris, 2014).

In this case, the results of Ofsted's assessment were the motivation for the school's decision to implement distributed leadership, which meant that the school was forced to adopt new management strategies and leadership to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and distributed leadership allowed teachers to make more decisions teachers were able to adopt new ways of teaching and learning to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This shows the important impact of external assessment on the development of school leadership. Secondly, teachers were supported by the school to develop and design a variety of programmes and the school had a culture of collaboration and openness to the extent that teachers were willing to take responsibility and be bold in innovating a variety of programmes. This reflects the impact of school culture and trust on distributed leadership. When there is mutual trust between the school management and the teachers, it is conducive for the teachers to be more proactive in their leadership roles. At the same time, the school management's decision to implement distributed leadership meant that managers, including the headmaster, actively shared and delegated power. In addition, the school's establishment of collaborative mechanisms with other schools not only provided teachers with opportunities to learn and exchange expertise but also took advantage of regional collaborative networks, which contributed to the development of a collaborative culture. The school's active engagement and collaboration with parents and the community reduced to some extent the resistance to the implementation of distributed leadership in the school. However, policy support was not demonstrated in this case.

Therefore, in this school, internal factors such as teachers' professional competence and willingness, school culture and trust, and the redistribution of leadership roles had a greater impact on the implementation of distributed leadership. Among the external factors, the pressure of the assessment system, the regional cooperation network, and the expectations of parents and the community also contributed to the implementation of distributed leadership in this school.

4. Analysis of Transformational Leadership

According to Ross and Gray (2006) the development of transformational leadership involves several principles. Firstly, a transformational school leader needs to have clear goals that are clearly understood by team members, and a strong sense of ownership of the goals by team members. Secondly, leaders need to lead by example, setting an example

through their behaviour and maintaining a positive attitude towards continuous learning and improvement. Third, leaders need to motivate team members to work hard to achieve common goals. Fourth, leaders need to promote co-operation between team members to maintain an effective teamwork. Fifth, leaders need to be sensitive to the developmental needs and differences of each team member and provide the necessary assistance. Finally, the spirit of change is essential for a leader, and only such a transformational leader can lead the team to innovate and develop.

There are a number of intrinsic factors that influence the effectiveness of transformational leadership development in the UK.

Firstly, according to Ross and Gray (2006) the style of the transformational leader has a significant impact on the intrinsic motivation of teachers and pupils, and headmasters can gain the respect of teachers and pupils by communicating positively and leading by example, thus increasing their enthusiasm and motivation. By setting reasonable and attractive goals for the school, the headmaster can make teachers and students more motivated to work towards them. Communication also enables teachers and students to understand and agree with the goals and to receive feedback from them so that they can adjust their strategies in a timely manner. Therefore, competencies such as leader style are important for the development of transformational leadership in UK schools.

Secondly, the development of transformational leadership is also influenced by the professional competence of teachers. Teachers' professional competence has a direct impact on the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices as well as student achievement. And transformational leadership to realise the goals of the school is needed to be achieved through the enhancement of teachers' professional competence. In addition, teachers are the implementers of the actual act of change, and their engagement and acceptance of change affect the success of change Day et al. (2009).

Third, student engagement and empowerment also play a crucial role in the development of transformational leadership. When students have a strong sense of responsibility, they are able to take charge of their school's development by being more proactive in the way they participate in various school activities and learning. At the same time, students' sense of belonging also influences their behaviour in school, so by involving students in school affairs, students' sense of belonging can be strengthened, which in turn strengthens students' sense of identity with the school, and transformational leadership can be better implemented in schools Cook-Sather (2006).

Finally, school culture has a significant role to play in the development of transformational leadership in UK schools. In the same way as distributed leadership a culture of collaboration and trust can also help the development of transformational leadership in UK schools. When teachers feel respected and trusted in their schools, they are more likely to be actively engaged in their schools.

On the other hand, there are a number of external factors that are important for the effectiveness of transformational leadership in UK schools.

Firstly, the National Curriculum and the system of standardized exams, such as GCSEs and A-levels set by the United Kingdom government, create the needs for the implementation of transformational leadership. The teaching and learning strategies of a school should adapt to the

developmental requirements of the students according to their uniqueness.

Secondly, policy support includes the second point indicating its great importance to transformational leadership. Such as education reform in England, which seriously affected the development of school leadership. Ball (2008) suggests that it can be said that education policy changes principally determine how these schools are managed and led. These 'academy' reforms provided schools with more autonomy in the UK and consequently made room for the efficiency of transformational leadership implementation.

Third, transformational leadership development is influenced not only by parental involvement but also by community involvement and concern. This is because the home and community can help the school to provide a variety of support to enable the school to meet the needs of its students (e.g., donations, volunteering, etc.). Parental involvement also enables students to have different learning experiences, which can contribute to the holistic development of students, and the community can provide support to schools by building stronger links with them, which can contribute to the development of transformational leadership.

Fourthly, the system of assessment and accountability in education in England also affects the practice of transformational leadership in schools; the Ofsted system of assessment puts pressure on schools to think about short-term improvements, making it difficult for schools to meet the standards of assessment and neglecting the long-term goals of teaching and learning. For example, pupils' academic performance and school management are areas that Ofsted inspections focus more on, so school leaders may spend more energy and resources on these areas to the detriment of pupils' holistic development (Hendriks and Scheerens, 2013).

Fifth, technology and resources also have important implications for the success of transformational leadership. With the support of technology teachers can experiment with more teaching methods and strategies to improve the quality of instruction. Technology can be used as a tool to help teachers implement a more personalised approach to teaching and learning and to share and disseminate teaching and learning resources so that teachers have access to the most up-to-date teaching and learning resources. Technology can also help students to learn in a more personalised way, according to their own abilities and interests. In addition, technology can be used as a tool to help schools to improve their management efficiency by providing a variety of data leaders can make more accurate decisions to help schools to better cope with change (Hargreaves and Shirley, n.d.).

In a school called Hob Green in Birmingham, England, students face many problems such as high number of single parent families, high number of low-income families and poor housing conditions. As a result, the school leaders decided to set up a pastoral support system in the school to reduce the impact of these factors on the academic performance of the students. There were a number of challenges in implementing transformational leadership. Firstly, there was a general perception among teachers that the factors influencing student performance could not be changed by the school and some of them did not recognise the role of change. Secondly, teachers in some roles are not able to fulfil their own responsibilities and do not collaborate with other teachers to achieve the school's development goals. In addition, the high mobility of students and teachers in schools, sick leave, salary and promotion issues lead to constant changes in students and

teachers, which affects the continuity of work and team development (Sharifan & National College for School Leadership, 2012).

Schools have proposed a number of measures to address these issues. Firstly, setting targets for change, by setting out clear objectives for the whole school's pastoral care system and explaining its impact on pupil outcomes, this has led to an awareness of the importance of change across the school. Secondly, the change team developed working mechanisms (e.g. weekly meetings, data-driven strategies) around the UK government's 'Every Child Matters (ECM)' five objectives (health, safety, enjoyment and achievement, positive contribution, economic well-being). Third, authority was distributed. The vice-principal ensured that the change was sustained by assigning clear responsibilities and goals to each individual on the change team, increasing the sense of value and responsibility of the team members, and enabling them to lead the change independently (Sharifan & National College for School Leadership, 2012).

The results showed that the measures taken by the change team had achieved excellent results. In the subsequent Ofsted evaluation the school achieved a 'good' rating in the three areas of 'care, guidance and support'. Teachers in the school have been encouraged to support and engage with the model through the achievements of the change team. Members of the change team came away from the experience with the practical experience and capacity to sustain the system and introduce the model to other schools.

In this case, the leadership team at Hob Green set a clear goal for change and set the direction so that all staff were able to effectively understand and support the goal. This demonstrates the importance of change leaders for transformational leadership. Secondly, members of the change team were given a lot of autonomy so that they had the ability to lead and implement change in their areas of responsibility, and the Vice Principal's trust and support for the change team made the team members more active in assuming responsibility for achieving their goals and had increased their self-confidence and competence, which reflects the importance of empowerment and team building for the development of transformational leadership. At the same time, the results of the change team's practice showed that the school's help could also influence students' behaviour and learning performance and change some teachers' initial views, and that the teachers' participation in the practice made the change more effective. This demonstrates the importance of teachers and support staff in change leadership.

In addition, the alignment of the school's implementation of change around the UK government's Every Child Matters (ECM) 'five goals' (health, safety, enjoyment and achievement, positive contribution, and economic well-being) with national policy direction can help the school to receive more resources and funding support, which also demonstrates the importance of policy influence on the school's change is type of leadership has an important impact. Secondly, the school serves a community of mostly low-income students whose behaviour is heavily influenced by their home environment, and the school is aware of the needs of the community and thus agrees with the leadership's goal of implementing change in order to provide students with the necessary help to solve the problems faced by the community, and also ensures that the administrators are able to identify with and carry out the philosophy of what it is all about, which is a reflection of the impact of transformational leadership on

the community's need for and support of the school. The financial pressures faced by the school and the instability of the staff also contributed to the level of difficulty in making changes

Therefore, internal factors affecting transformational leadership in this case include the influence of school leadership, team empowerment, and teacher support. External factors included policy support, community needs, and technical and resource support.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the successful implementation and development of distributed and transformational leadership in UK schools is also influenced by both internal and external factors. The culture of the secondary school, communication mechanisms and teacher involvement all play an integral role and these are internal factors. External factors such as the implementation of national policies and the availability of resources determine the implementation of leadership. These case studies of English schools illustrate that distributed and transformational leadership can only be effective when internal factors such as a good culture and greater empowerment are combined with external support such as policy and available resources to improve the quality and outcomes of teaching and learning. At the same time, there are a number of barriers to leadership development including limited resources and systems of assessment and evaluation in education (e.g. Ofsted inspections). Therefore, the development of leadership in schools requires not only a positive climate of encouragement and support, but also an appropriate response to external influences. By responding to and addressing these factors in a sensible way, schools in the UK can strengthen their leadership practices, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes and pupil success.

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