

# **The Research on the Leadership Development Model of University Teachers**

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## **Abstract**

The objectives of this research were 1)to explore and identify the elements of leadership development for university lecturers, establishing new goals and directions for their professional development,2)To examine the leadership development of university lecturers, we have established a model,3)To seek a theoretical basis for lecturers to have more participation and influence in university decision-making, further clarifying the current obstacles and challenges in university lecturer leadership development, and identifying effective strategies for Chinese universities to utilize and enhance lecturer leadership, improve educational standards and quality, and boost international competitiveness in higher education. The sample was based on 10 outstanding college teachers. They were selected by qualitative analysis software Nvivo 12 the research instrument for the data collection were summarized the leadership of teachers in colleges and universities into moral leadership, teaching leadership and research leadership through 3 steps of open coding principal coding and selective coding.

The statistics for data analysis leadership have preliminarily constructed a theoretical analysis framework for the leadership of university teachers. The research results were found as follows; 1)Moral leadership dimension: promoting the moral charm of teachers. 2)Teaching leadership dimension: highlighting teachers' teaching leadership.3) Research leadership dimension: highlighting teachers' research leadership.4)Peer leadership: unleashing peer influence. Suggestion: In order to further clarify the elements of the leadership of young teachers in universities and colleges and establish a measurement tool for the leadership development of young teachers in universities and colleges in China, this study intends to construct a theoretical model of the leadership of college teachers by combining qualitative research and quantitative research according to the local characteristics of China, in order to provide theoretical basis and practical reference for further promoting the leadership development of college teachers.

**Keywords:** University teachers; Teacher leadership; Construction of Leadership Model of Teachers in Colleges and Universities

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\* Received: April 16 2024; Revised: May 6 2024; Accepted: May 9 2024

## Introduction

In China, the concept of teacher leadership was established in the new round of teaching curriculum reform that began in 2001. Teachers are positioned as the main body of education and the key to cultivating high-quality talents. Teachers are the implementers of education policies, the practitioners of curriculum reform, and it is who hold the fate of educational reform. In 2010, the outline of the National Medium - and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) clearly pointed out that teachers are foundation of education. The motherland and the times have endowed teachers with an irreplaceable historical mission in improving the quality of the people and implementing the national sustainable development strategy. With the research on educational leadership heating up in the western educational circles, Chinese scholars have also begun to pay attention to this issue. Since 2010, there have been more and more researches on teacher leadership under the themes such as "teaching leadership", "curriculum leadership", "teacher moral leadership", and "teacher professional leadership".(Zhao, 2021). Moreover many researchers have examined teacher professional growth from the perspectives of education, psychology, sociology, economics, philosophy, management, and conducted extensive and in-depth discussions on it. Among them, there are many excellent and unique works, which have also established the research paradigm of teacher's professional growth. At the same time, we have also found that teacher leadership is gradually forming new research areas and hotspots for teacher growth. As professionals, teachers themselves have the professional decision-making power over curriculum, teaching and academic research. Teachers should have considerable leadership on students, curriculum and teaching, scientific research, school culture and development, etc.

From the current research status of teacher leadership, although many domestic and foreign scholars have conducted extensive research on the concept, structure, measurement, influencing factors, functions, and effects of teacher leadership, and have achieved rich results in both theoretical and practical aspects, there is still great room for progress in the research of teacher leadership in colleges and universities. First, there are many speculative theoretical studies in current research, while only a small part belongs to qualitative or small sample quantitative studies. Second, the current research on teacher leadership mainly focuses on primary and secondary school teachers, while there are relatively few studies involving university teachers. Third, in terms of setting the subject of teacher leadership, the current research on teacher leadership is mainly limited to principals or backbone teachers with formal leadership positions, lacking of attention to ordinary teachers. Therefore, through the theoretical exploration of the connection and the realistic investigation of the current situation of teacher leadership in colleges and universities this study tries to find the driving force and resistance factors of the development of teachers in colleges and universities, identify the driving and resistance factors for the development of university teacher leadership, and propose development strategies for university teacher leadership, in order to better mobilize the initiative, enthusiasm, creativity, and work enthusiasm of university teachers, break their isolation and passive development status, and form a more professional work atmosphere. Let it shoulder the responsibility of a professional for teaching reform, teacher development, and student progress in universities, and also make the potential for more university teachers to grow into "masters" a reality(Xu,2019).

## Research Objectives

1. To study, explore, and confirm the elements of leadership development for university lecturers, and establish new goals and directions for their professional development.
2. To examine the leadership development of university lecturers, we have established a model.
3. To seek a theoretical basis for lecturers to have more participation and influence in university decision-making, further clarifying the current obstacles and challenges in university lecturer leadership development, and identifying effective strategies for Chinese universities to utilize and enhance lecturer leadership, improve educational standards and quality, and boost international competitiveness in higher education.

## Research Methodology

### 1. Research Design

The purpose of this study is to establish a leadership development model for university teachers based on teacher development, and identify the constituent elements of leadership development for university teachers. The collected data were input into the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 12, and the data were analyzed through the qualitative research method of Grounded theory, and the analytical framework of the leadership development model of university teachers was initially constructed(Fullan, 1994). Afterwards, theoretical saturation testing was conducted on the interview data of the remaining research subjects, and triangular mutual verification was conducted with other textual data to continuously refine and revise the leadership model of university teachers until theoretical saturation was achieved.

### 2. Sample of the Research

The main sample for the study comprised one-on-one interviews with 10 selected university teachers in order to obtain information on the current status of the components, incentive mechanisms, and development obstacles of teacher leadership development. The 10 teachers were interviewed by semi-structured questionnaires..

### 3. Research Tools

We used the following three steps:

3.1 By combining the video and detailed interview text, and continuously comparing the original materials, label them word by word to form relevant concepts. By conceptualizing text, unstructured interview records can be further institutionalized, new concepts and ideas can be extracted from empirical facts, relevant sentences reflecting the leadership of university teachers can be identified, their meanings can be further clarified, and more accurate and valuable concepts can be extracted. With concepts as nodes, open coding is carried out, and 65 local concepts are extracted and extracted, and 14 categories are formed through systematic classification, merging, and formation.

3.2 Spindle encoding focuses on specific categories and their relationships with other categories(Katezenmeyer & Molle, 2001). By spindle weaving code, further reading, thinking, and analyzing the content of 65 localized concepts previously obtained through open coding, and adjusting and merging the concept content to identify the commonalities of these conceptualized contents. The 65 conceptualized categories are summarized into 14 main categories, which are: dedication, honesty and integrity, hard work, down-to-earth work, caring for students, helping them grow, treating others equally, and setting examples; Excellent

teaching, student recognition, promotion of educational reform, commitment to innovation, emphasis on communication, and encouragement of questioning; Research interest, innovation, will, and leadership; Collaboration awareness and peer influence(Wilson, 2016).

3.3 After the spindle coding is completed, based on the coding information, the spindle coding can be classified into four core categories, Which are namely moral competence, teaching leadership, research leadership, and peer leadership. The four main axes of dedication, honesty and integrity, hard work, down-to-earth work, caring for students, helping them grow, treating others equally, and exemplary behavior can be summarized as personality leadership. The three main axes of teaching excellence, student recognition, promoting educational reform, dedicating to innovation, emphasizing communication, and encouraging questioning can be summarized as teaching leadership. The four main axis codes of research interest, research innovation, research will, and research leadership can be summarized as research leadership. The two main axes of cooperation awareness and peer influence can be summarized as peer leadership.

#### 4. Data Collection

How to define the leadership of university teachers? What are the elements of leadership development for university teachers? What are the characteristics? To find the answers to the above questions, this study firstly adopted a qualitative research method, using open-ended interviews and reading of relevant literature. The data was analyzed by using an inductive method. And the study attempted to construct a theoretical model of leadership development for university teachers and interpreted the significance of the research object in the world of educational life.

4.1 The Central Party School Press of the Communist Party of China has successively published the book "Touching China - Person of the Year", and researchers have selected 8 outstanding representative teachers from universities from this series of books. The books have successively included the advanced deeds of representatives of Chinese university education teachers, such as Yang Zhenning, Ye Jiaying, Wang Lu Yonggen, Huang Danian, Huang Xuhua, Pan Weilian, and Su Bingtian. Therefore, we can collect the qualitative data required for our research from them.

In this study, two books, "Touching China - Person of the Year" and "Conscience of Universities: A Case Study of Teacher Ethics for University Teachers", as well as other interviews about outstanding university teachers, are used as data sources for outstanding university teachers' professional development. These materials contain the practical experience and educational wisdom of outstanding educators and teachers.

4.2 The purpose of this study is to establish a leadership model for university teachers based on teacher development and identify the constituent elements of university teacher leadership. However, due to the fact that most of the outstanding teachers selected are well-known experts and scholars who are admired by the education industry in China, which cannot represent the majority of ordinary university teachers, this study also selected 10 teachers from 10 universities, including Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Liaoning, Chongqing, who have made outstanding achievements in personality, teaching, scientific research, and peer leadership, for one-on-one interviews, At the same time, some relevant information on their introduction and promotion was collected as a supplement to the interview.

### 5. Data Analysis

Based on the personal information of outstanding university teachers and the interview results of university teachers, the following results were obtained through data analysis:

5.1 Through qualitative research methods, moral leadership accounts for 41.2% of all coding frequency choices, ranking the first. The proportion of teaching leadership in all coding frequency choices is 22.7%, ranking the second; Research leadership accounted for 21.7% of all coding frequency choices, ranking the third; Peer leadership accounted for 14.4% of all coding frequency choices, ranking fourth.

5.2 Afterwards, theoretical saturation testing was conducted on the interview data of the remaining research subjects, and triangular mutual verification was conducted with other textual data to continuously refine and revise the leadership model of university teachers until theoretical saturation was achieved.

## Research Scope

### 1. Population

Sichuan Foreign Studies University, abbreviated as "Chuanwai", is located in Shapingba District, Chongqing. It is a full-time ordinary university approved by the Ministry of Education and affiliated with the Chongqing Municipal People's Government. It is one of the earliest four foreign language colleges and universities established by the country. There are currently 1361 faculty and staff members in the school.

### 2. Samples

The sample consisted of approximately 317 survey questionnaires distributed at Sichuan Foreign Studies University, and non probability sampling was used for empirical testing.

### 3. Variables

#### 3.1 Independent Variable

##### 3.1.1 Moral leadership

##### 3.1.2 Teaching leadership

##### 3.1.3 Research leadership

##### 3.1.4 Peer leadership

#### 3.2 Dependent Variable

Teacher leadership.

## Research Results

Using the qualitative research method of Grounded theory, taking eight outstanding university teachers as research objects, we obtained qualitative research data through interviews and text analysis. With the help of the qualitative analysis software Nvivo12, we analyzed the data. Through three steps of open coding, spindle coding and selective coding, we summarized the leadership of university teachers into four dimensions: moral leadership, teaching leadership, research leadership and peer leadership. We have preliminarily constructed a theoretical analysis framework for the leadership of university teachers. Afterwards, theoretical saturation testing was conducted on the interview data of the remaining research subjects, and triangular mutual verification was conducted with other textual data to

continuously refine and revise the leadership model of university teachers until theoretical saturation was achieved. The research results were as follows:

By spindle weaving code, further reading, thinking, and analyzing the content of 65 localized concepts previously obtained through open coding, and adjusting and merging the concept content to identify the commonalities of these conceptualized contents. The 65 conceptualized categories are summarized into 14 main categories, which are: dedication, honesty and integrity, hard work, down-to-earth work, caring for students, helping them grow, treating others equally, and setting examples; Excellent teaching, student recognition, promotion of educational reform, commitment to innovation, emphasis on communication, and encouragement of questioning; Research interest, innovation, will, and leadership; teamwork awareness and peer influence. This is shown in the following table 1.

**Table 1** Spindle encoding focuses on specific categories and their relationships with other categories.

Main Category	Category	Category Connotation
moral leadership	Political appraisal	A firm political stance
	Personality charisma	Excellent personal qualities (diligence, humility, optimism, etc.)
	Professional demonstration ability	have a positive impact on others. A model of being responsible in work, striving for excellence, caring for and helping students to grow and moral Character.
	Teaching decision-making power	Ability to establish teaching objectives and choose teaching methods on good information acquisition and problem-solving skills.
Teaching leadership	Teaching implementation ability	Carry out, mobilize, stimulate students' potential, and solve problems in the classroom. Ability to achieve good teaching outcomes.
	Teaching innovation	The ability to apply new teaching technologies, methods, and scientific research results to classroom teaching and promote teaching innovation.
	Research focus	Strong interest and significant investment in scientific research.
Research leadership	Research willpower	Strong interest and significant investment in scientific research.
	Innovation in scientific research	A scientific research innovation spirit that boldly questions and challenges authority.
Peer leadership	Team spirit	The consciousness of proactively collaborating with peers in teaching and research work.

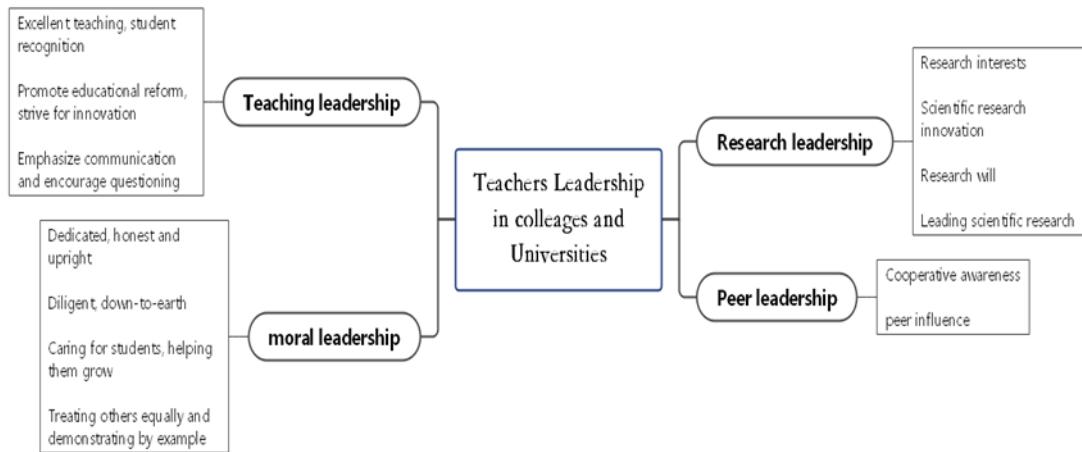
peer influence Strong influence on peers in team collaboration.

After the spindle coding is completed, according to the coding information, the spindle coding can be summarized into four core categories, namely, moral leadership, teaching leadership, scientific research leadership, and team leadership. Dedication, honesty and integrity, hard work, down-to-earth, care for students, help them grow, treat people equally, example demonstration of these four main axes can be summarized as personality leadership. Teaching excellence, student recognition, promotion of teaching reform, dedication to innovation, focus on communication, encourage questions, these three main axes can be summarized as teaching leadership. The four main axes of scientific research interest, scientific research innovation, scientific research will and scientific research leadership can be summarized as scientific research leadership. The two main axes of cooperation consciousness and peer influence can be summarized as team leadership. This is shown in the following table 2.

**Table 2** The distribution of data in various dimensions in coding

Select encoding	axial coding	frequency	Percentage of open coding frequency
moral leadership	Dedicated, honest and upright	21	11.4%
	Diligent and down-to-earth	13	8%
	Caring for students and helping them grow	24	15%
	Treating others equally and demonstrating by example	13	6.8%
	Excellent teaching and student recognition	12	7.5%
Teaching leadership	Promote educational reform and strive for innovation	8	3.9%
	Emphasize communication and encourage questioning	20	11.3%
	Research interests	11	5.8%
Research leadership	Scientific research innovation	9	5%
	Research will	8	6%
	Scientific research guidance	6	4%
Peer leadership	Cooperative awareness	14	7.2%
	peer influence	14	7.2%

In Strauss' view, the process of coding under the framework of grounded theory is the process of creating theory (Kukatz, Zhu & Fan, 2014). This study establishes a preliminary theoretical framework model for university teacher leadership through three steps: open coding, spindle coding, and selective coding, as shown in the following figure 1.



**Figure 1** The theoretical framework model of college teachers' leadership

Source: By Author

Afterwards, theoretical saturation test was conducted on the interview data of the remaining research subjects, and triangular mutual verification was conducted with other textual data to continuously refine and revise the leadership model of university teachers until theoretical saturation was achieved(Tan & Li, 2016).

## Discussion

The research results can be discussed as follows:

1. Moral leadership dimension: promoting the moral charm of teachers.

The familiar definitions and requirements for teachers, such as 'teachers are engineers of the human soul ', 'teachers with high moral standards and exemplary behavior ', and 'exemplary behavior ', all highlight the significance of 'teacher ethics' for teachers as educational professionals (Lin, 2010). The moral authority of teachers is a professional characteristic and an important source of teacher leadership.

2. Teaching leadership dimension: highlighting teachers' teaching leadership.

Teaching leadership is the leadership demonstrated by teachers in the teaching process. It is a force that teachers exert influence on teaching activities through individual and group leadership of students, in order to make teaching activities operate and achieve expected goals. As a teaching leadership, it is particularly necessary to have the ability to design teaching process and make teaching innovation, develop and utilize teaching resources, and create good teaching contexts.

3. Research leadership dimension: highlighting teachers' research leadership.

The research leadership of teachers is an important connotation of teacher leadership, which is the will and talent of teachers about research and the ability to elicit expected reactions from other teachers in the school through various means. Research leadership is a type of professional leadership, which refers to the exemplary role, leading role, and professional discourse power that teachers gain in the field of scientific research through their own professional abilities and authority(Kezar, 2007). It is essentially a personality manifestation of the non-power role of teachers in education and research.

#### 4. Peer leadership: unleashing peer influence

Teachers' peer leadership is mainly committed to the sharing of experience and wisdom among teachers' peers, transforms teachers' individual knowledge and ability into the common knowledge and ability of teachers, so that all teachers and staff of the school can work together, cooperate with each other, it can build the value of school teachers and make get a deep understanding.

### Recommendations

The recommendations of this research are as follows:

1. The leadership of college teachers has moral character and is a moral cause. The value of education is to enable students to grow and bring about positive changes in their lives. The achievement of this goal requires not only the rich knowledge of teachers, but also a noble moral escort.

2. Teaching leadership is regarded as the core of teacher leadership by many scholars, especially in the research on teacher leadership in primary and secondary schools, teaching leadership is often regarded as a substitute for teacher leadership.

3. Scientific research leadership is a dimension that more reflects the professional characteristics of college teachers, because in addition to teaching and educating people, college teachers are also responsible for conducting high-level scientific research and promoting scientific and technological progress and social development.

4. Peer leadership is a key ability for teacher leaders. It has outstanding performance in promoting students' learning through teaching teams, building scientific research teams to promote the development of colleagues, and supporting colleagues to cooperate with relevant domestic and foreign higher education institutions or other organizations.

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