The Role of Students in Educational Leadership

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Against the backdrop of global education reform, the connotation of educational leadership is becoming increasingly rich and diversified. In the traditional sense, educational leadership is mostly dominated by administrative staff such as principals and teachers, while students are usually regarded as passive recipients of the educational process. However, in recent years, the education community has gradually recognized the unique value of students in school management and decision-making, and the role of students as educational subjects has received more attention. This change stems from the need to build a more democratic, inclusive and effective education system.

Internationally, many countries have incorporated student participation in educational leadership into education policies. For example, in Finland, student participation in school governance is part of the legal provisions, and the student committee regularly discusses education policies and school development plans with the school (Sahlberg, 2011). Many schools in the United States and the United Kingdom have also established student unions, giving students the right to express their opinions and influence school decisions (Fielding, 2001). These practices not only reflect respect for students' rights and interests but also promote the all-round development of students' abilities.

In China, with the in-depth promotion of quality education and the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, student feedback on educational leadership has become a necessary factor for the smooth progress of reform (Wang Yongqiang & Hu Ping, 2022). Although some schools have tried to give students more management rights through forms such as student unions and class committees, overall, the degree of student participation in school management and educational decision-making is still relatively limited, lacking systematic and theoretical support. Therefore, exploring the role of students in educational leadership is of great significance to promoting the all-round development of students and promoting the optimization of the education system.

In addition, the research paradigm of educational leadership is also changing. Previous studies have focused on traditional fields such as principal leadership and teacher leadership, while research on student leadership is relatively rare (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In recent years, some researchers have proposed the concept of distributed leadership, emphasizing that leadership can be distributed and shared by school members (Harris, 2008). Under this theoretical framework, students are not only educated, but also potential leaders. Their opinions and actions can inject new impetus into school development.

Research significance

Theoretical significance

This study will provide a new perspective for the theoretical research of educational leadership. As an important member of the school community, the impact of student leadership roles on school culture, organizational behavior and educational effectiveness has not been fully explored. By studying the role of students in educational leadership, we can deepen our understanding of the "distribution of leadership" theory and reveal how students can have a positive impact on school development through individual actions and collective collaboration.

In addition, this study helps to expand the connotation of educational equity theory. Traditional educational equity focuses on resource allocation, educational opportunities and results, while student participation in educational leadership further emphasizes the equality of discourse power in the educational process. This shift from equity to empowerment not only broadens the scope of research on educational equity but also provides a theoretical basis for the democratization of education.

Practical significance

From a practical perspective, this study helps to promote the innovation of school management models. Under the current management system centered on principals and teachers, students' voices are often ignored or marginalized. However, students' understanding and understanding of school education, as well as the school management model, have a significant impact on the school's management and leadership. The participation of students in the school environment and learning needs is often more direct and profound than that of adults. If students can fully play their role in educational leadership, it can not only improve the efficiency of school management but also enhance the pertinence and scientific nature of policy making (Lundahl&Olson, 2013).

Secondly, this study is of great value to the individual development of students. Leadership is a key core ability in the 21st century. Cultivating students' leadership can improve their communication, decision-making, cooperation and problem-solving abilities (Fullan, 2014). By guiding students to participate in school governance, they can be provided with real leadership practice opportunities and help them prepare for their future social roles. Finally, this study can provide a reference for policymakers. By revealing the advantages and challenges of students' participation in educational leadership, policymakers can design more scientific educational policies and encourage schools to give students more power in management and decision-making. This is of great significance for improving the quality of school education, promoting educational equity and achieving personalized education goals.

Social significance from a broader social perspective, studying the role of students in educational leadership can promote the spread of democratic values. By practicing democratic consultation and sharing of rights and responsibilities in schools, students will better understand and identify with the basic principles of democratic governance (Hart, 1992). This will not only help enhance their civic awareness but also cultivate future citizens with a sense of participation and social responsibility.

In addition, in a rapidly changing globalized society, education needs to cultivate interdisciplinary and cross-cultural leaders to solve complex problems. The cultivation of student leadership is an important way to achieve this goal. By strengthening the role of students in educational leadership, we can not only promote the reform of the education system but also provide innovative talents for the sustainable development of society. Studying the role of students in educational leadership is not only of theoretical value, but also of great practical and social significance. By exploring the positioning and function of students in educational leadership, we can deepen our understanding of educational leadership theory, promote the innovation of school management models, and provide new paths for the all-round development of students. In future educational reforms, students, as a key link in educational leadership, should receive more attention and importance.

1.2. Research Questions and Purpose

Research Questions

This study revolves around the role of students in educational leadership, focusing on how students participate in educational decision-making, teaching improvement, school culture construction, etc. To this end, the following research questions were designed:

1. What is the core role of students in educational leadership?

2. Do students play an active role in the school's leadership structure?

3. How do they specifically participate in school decision-making, curriculum design, or the organization of educational activities?

4. Can student leadership promote the improvement of school management efficiency?

5. Are there significant differences in the practice of student leadership in a multicultural context?

6. How do educational systems, policies, and school environments shape students' leadership behaviors?

7. What are the effective paths and strategies to promote student leadership development?

8. How to provide students with more leadership development opportunities through educational policies, school culture, and teacher guidance?

9. Can distributed leadership theory, empowerment theory, etc. effectively explain the phenomenon of student leadership?

10. What are the applicability and limitations of the theoretical framework in actual educational contexts?

Research Purpose

This study aims to explore the role of students in educational leadership and its potential impact on educational development through theoretical analysis and literature review. The specific research objectives are as follows:

1. Clarify the positioning and role of students in educational leadership

2. Explore how students can reflect their own value in educational leadership through specific behaviors, and analyze the diversity and importance of their roles

3. Reveal the positive role of student leadership in school management and education quality

4. Explore how student leadership can improve the overall effectiveness of schools and educational equity

5. By analyzing the similarities and differences of student leadership in different cultures and educational systems, reveal the key factors affecting student leadership and provide a basis for cross-cultural research.

6. Summarize existing theories, methods and methods to provide reference for student leadership research. Such as distributed leadership theory, empowerment theory, etc., and propose a theoretical model suitable for student leadership development.

7. Provide actionable strategic suggestions to help schools design plans and policies suitable for student leadership development.

Main content and structure of the study 1.3.

This study mainly explores the multidimensional theory of educational leadership and the role of students in educational leadership and deeply analyzes the relationship between the two. This study first defines educational leadership, and through a literature review, explains the evolution of the concept of educational leadership and its key figures, from the traditional power limited to the principal to the modern distributed leadership concept, emphasizing that every participant should have the right to educational leadership. Then, this study introduces in detail two leadership theories that have a profound impact on the subject of this article: transformational leadership and distributed leadership, explores the regional differences in their implementation around the world, their respective advantages and challenges, and analyzes the similarities and differences between the two leadership theories, providing a solid theoretical basis for the study.

The core theme of this study is: what role do students play in educational leadership. The roles of students in educational leadership can be summarized into three types: co-decision makers,

change agents, and leaders. The realization of these three roles depends on transformational leadership or distributed leadership, or a combination of the two. To comprehensively analyze this issue, this study decomposes these three roles into three parts, combines the research results of domestic and foreign scholars, and specifically explores how students play different roles, the achievements they have made, and the challenges they face in different historical backgrounds and cultural environments. Through the literature review method, theoretical support is provided for these arguments, and the actual impact and significance of students playing roles in various educational environments are analyzed.

In order to further enhance the depth and persuasiveness of the research, this paper also explores the theory of youth development and the theory of student empowerment, specifically analyzes the development process of these two theories, their relationship with student leadership, and their positive role in educational leadership, and discusses the challenges encountered in the process of theoretical development.

Finally, this paper comprehensively evaluates the literature involved, draws conclusions and puts forward its own insights. Based on the research results, this paper puts forward specific suggestions on the role positioning of students in educational leadership and summarizes and looks forward to the research.

2. Research Methodology

This study mainly adopts the literature review method, aiming to explore the role positioning of students in educational leadership, empowerment mechanism and its relationship with youth development through comprehensive analysis of relevant domestic and foreign literature. The literature review method helps to systematically sort out existing research results, reveal research trends and controversies, find research gaps, and provide a theoretical basis for further exploration of research issues. The design and implementation process of the literature review method in this study will be described below.

2.1. **Research Design**

The research design of this paper includes the following key steps: literature collection, literature screening and evaluation, literature analysis and synthesis, summary of research literature results, and dialectical analysis of research results. Through the implementation of these links, this study will ensure the comprehensiveness, representativeness and depth of the literature review.

1. Literature collection: To ensure the breadth and representativeness of the research, this study will widely collect literature related to educational leadership, student empowerment, youth development, etc., mainly through the following channels:

Database retrieval mainly relies on well-known academic databases such as Google Scholar, CNKI, ERIC, etc., and conducts comprehensive retrieval with keywords such as educational leadership, student empowerment, youth development, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership. By consulting the references in the selected literature, tracing back to classic literature and related research, expanding the scope of literature collection, and paying special attention to high-quality articles and research reports in academic journals.

2. Literature screening and evaluation

Based on the collection of many literatures, this study will strictly screen and evaluate the literature, mainly based on the following standards:

Relevance: The content of the literature must be closely related to the research topic, especially the core theories and empirical research in the fields of student leadership, empowerment, and youth development.

Academic quality: Priority is given to peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs by wellknown scholars, and research results with high academic influence.

Citation frequency: Select literature with high citation volume to ensure that the included literature has a certain academic influence.

3. Literature Analysis and Synthesis

Based on the literature screening, this study will conduct a systematic content analysis and theme induction and deeply explore the main viewpoints and theoretical frameworks in the literature on the role positioning of students in educational leadership. Specifically, the following analysis will be conducted:

The diversified development of educational leadership theory, especially how theories such as transformational leadership and distributed leadership are related to student role transformation.

The connotation, mechanism and impact of student empowerment, especially how students can achieve self-leadership development through participation in school decision-making, leadership practice and other processes.

The impact of youth development theory on student leadership, explore the psychological characteristics and social cognitive abilities of adolescents at different development stages, and how these factors affect their roles and performance in educational leadership.

2.2. **Research Objects and Sample Selection**

The research object of this study is the existing academic literature, and the research sample is literature related to educational leadership, distributed leadership, transformational leadership, student empowerment and youth development. Since this study adopts the literature review method, the research sample is not from actual surveys or interviews but is selected based on existing literature resources.

Specific sample selection criteria include:

1. Classic literature and innovative research in the field of educational leadership, including classic works on theories such as transformational leadership and distributed leadership, as well as empirical research in recent years.

2. Literature related to student empowerment, mainly focusing on how students participate in school decision-making, how to improve leadership in the educational process, and related research on empowerment mechanisms.

3. Literature on adolescent development theory, focusing on the stage characteristics of adolescent physical and mental development, especially how to affect students' leadership performance in school.

During the sample selection process, the study will conduct a rigorous evaluation of each document to ensure its high standards in quality and relevance.

2.3. **Data collection methods**

1. Database search

Use academic databases such as Google Scholar, CNKI, ERIC, etc. to search for literature through precise keyword combinations and collect research results in related fields. After each search, the researchers will further screen and record highly relevant literature to ensure the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the data.

2. Literature citation tracking

After retrieving the preliminary literature, we will further use the citation tracking method to discover more potential and in-depth related research. This method helps to discover classic literature and widely cited important literature, ensuring the authority of the literature.

3. After retrieving the preliminary literature, we will further discover more potential and indepth related research through citation tracking. This method helps to discover widely cited classic and important literature, thereby ensuring the authority of the literature.

3. Monographs and research reports

In addition to journal articles and dissertations, this study will also extensively review monographs and research reports in related fields, especially those research books and policy documents that systematically summarize educational leadership and student empowerment theories. These documents often cover more extensive and profound theoretical analysis and empirical research.

2.4. **Data Analysis Methods**

In the process of data analysis, the study will use content analysis and thematic induction to conduct in-depth analysis of the collected literature. The specific analysis process is as follows:

1. Content Analysis

The study will extract key information from the literature in detail and analyze the main views and conclusions of different scholars on topics such as educational leadership, student empowerment and youth development. The content analysis will focus on the core concepts and theoretical frameworks of educational leadership, especially the impact of transformational leadership and distributed leadership theory on student leadership roles. The connotation and implementation path of student empowerment and how to improve students' leadership through institutional design, cultural construction and other means, explore the core ideas of youth leadership development theory and its role in student leadership development. as well as the impact of different development stages of adolescents on their leadership performance.

2. Theme summary

This study will form a research framework and theoretical model by summarizing similar topics in different literatures. In this process, the study will focus on extracting the following topics from the literature:

The definition and characteristics of student leadership.

The multiple roles of students in educational leadership (for example, co-decision makers, change promoters, leaders, etc.).

The impact of empowerment mechanisms on the formation of student leadership.

The development stage of adolescents and their role in shaping student leadership roles.

3. Cross-cultural comparison

Since educational leadership and student empowerment have different manifestations in different cultural backgrounds, this study will also explore how cultural differences affect students' roles and performance in educational leadership by comparing literature from different countries and regions.

2.5. **Ethical considerations**

Although this study adopts the literature review method and the data source is public academic resources, it still needs to comply with certain ethical standards. This study strictly follows the principle of academic integrity. All references will be accurately marked to avoid plagiarism. The source of each reference will be clearly indicated to ensure academic integrity. In the process of literature analysis, the study will maintain an objective and neutral position, try to avoid personal bias, and present the views and research results of each scholar impartially. At the same time, the study will comprehensively compare the views of different schools to avoid one-sided interpretation. This study will ensure that the literature review process is highly transparent. The screening criteria, analysis methods, and evaluation systems of all documents

will be detailed to ensure that other researchers can reproduce the process and results of this study.

3. Literature Review

Definition of Educational Leadership

Definition and Theoretical Basis of Educational Leadership 3.1.

Educational leadership is a core concept in the field of educational management. It usually refers to leaders within educational institutions, such as principals, teacher leaders, and educational managers, who influence and promote the improvement of education quality, school culture development, and student growth through their professional knowledge, management skills, leadership strategies, and decision-making abilities. Different scholars and researchers have different definitions of educational leadership.

3.1.1. Conceptual evolution of educational leadership

In traditional definitions, educational leadership is often seen as an extension of management activities. From this perspective, educational leadership focuses on resource allocation, system establishment, task allocation, and management of daily operations. This type of leadership emphasizes efficiency, order, and control, and the role of the leader is like a "manager" in an organization. Educational managers provide a systematic framework to help educational leaders clarify the basic functions in school management, such as planning, organization, leadership, and coordination. This has a direct impact on the definition of educational leadership, especially in understanding how educational managers can reasonably allocate resources, coordinate teacher-student relationships, and reasonably arrange school operations (Gulick & Urwick, 2004). However, some scholars believe that the leadership role of the principal should be based on reflective practice, that is, the principal should not only be a manager, but also an educator and cultural builder. Through moral guidance and value shaping, the principal can create a positive cultural atmosphere within the school, thereby promoting the continuous progress of educational reform and school development. School leaders should not only focus on performance and results, but also on the core values and educational goals of the school, influence teachers and students through role models, and promote the transformation and improvement of school culture (Sangiovanni, 1987). Another more widely accepted traditional educational leadership model is authoritative leadership. Busher (2006) believes that authoritative leadership is a leadership style centered on the leader's clear decision-making, strong control and cultural shaping ability. Authoritative leaders ensure the efficient operation of the school by setting clear goals and norms and providing clear directions, while relying on personal expertise and moral authority to win the trust and support of the school. The trust and support of teachers and faculty. Under this leadership model, leaders are often able to make decisions quickly and drive the organization forward through clear instructions, thereby maintaining order and efficiency in the school. However, Busher (2006) also pointed out that although authoritative leadership has obvious advantages in ensuring efficient and goal-oriented school management, the excessive concentration of decision-making power and authoritative control may inhibit teachers' sense of participation and autonomy, thereby limiting the innovation and diversity of educational practice. Therefore, this leadership style may lead to a lack of flexibility and creativity to a certain extent. However, with the change of educational concepts, especially from the late 20th century to the early 21st century, the definition of educational leadership has gradually become richer and more diverse, reflecting a more complex social and cultural background and educational concepts. Modern educational leadership models and related research are also more extensive. Among them, the more famous

ones are transformational leadership, conversion leadership, distributed leadership, moral leadership, instructional leadership, situational leadership, team leadership, etc

3.1.2. Main theoretical framework

1. Transformational leadership

As one of the important branches of leadership theory, transformational leadership has been widely studied and applied since the 1970s, especially in the field of education, and its role has been recognized by more and more scholars and practitioners. Transformational leadership emphasizes motivating and inspiring the intrinsic motivation of followers to promote deep changes in the organization and promote the growth and development of organizational members. Burns (1978) first proposed the concept of transformational leadership. He believed that transformational leadership is a process in which leaders inspire and inspire followers' intrinsic motivation to help them achieve common goals beyond personal interests, thereby promoting organizational change and innovation. Unlike traditional transactional leadership, transformational leadership not only focuses on completing tasks, but also emphasizes stimulating the potential of followers and enhancing their sense of responsibility and mission. Bass & Bass (1985) further expanded the theory of transformational leadership, proposed four key dimensions, and constructed a theoretical model of transformational leadership. These four dimensions are idealized influence, inspiring motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personalized care. Bass & Bass (1985) believed that leaders should be role models for followers by demonstrating noble values and behaviors, which is idealized influence. Achieving a common vision through motivational words and igniting the enthusiasm of followers is inspiring motivation. Encouraging followers to come up with new ideas and solutions to problems, promoting innovation and learning, is intellectual stimulation. And paying attention to the personal needs and growth of followers, providing personalized guidance and support, is personalized care. At the same time, he also compared transformational leadership with transactional leadership, further clarifying the difference between the two. Bass & Bass (1985) proposed that transformational leadership has unique influence.

Subsequently, Avolio & Bass (1991) further verified the effectiveness and practical value of transformational leadership by developing multidimensional quantitative measurement tools such as leadership questionnaires. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) proposed by Bass & Avolio (1996) has important theoretical and practical significance, providing a reliable tool for the measurement of transformational leadership and promoting research in the field of leadership. This study shows that transformational leadership not only helps to improve employee satisfaction and performance, but also can stimulate organizational innovation and change, and has a significant positive effect. Therefore, MLQ has become an indispensable measurement tool in global leadership research, and in practice provides organizations with effective leadership style assessment and improvement suggestions. Bass & Avolio (1996)'s research also shows that transformational leadership can improve employees' job satisfaction, work engagement and organizational commitment, and has a significant positive impact on organizational performance. Leithwood & Riehl (2005) believes that transformational leadership has a strong correlation with school culture construction and student performance. Principals can help improve the overall performance of schools by motivating teachers, promoting collaboration and innovation, and improving the school atmosphere. Research also shows that transformational leadership can effectively promote organizational culture change, stimulate innovative thinking, and help organizations gain sustained competitiveness in change. Bush (2008) believes that leadership and management skills need to be cultivated through continuous professional development, training and education. Modern educational leaders need not only management skills, but also transformational leadership capabilities.

Differences between transformational leadership in China and the West

With the widespread dissemination of transformational leadership theory, more and more scholars have begun to study the applicability and manifestation of the theory in different cultural contexts. House et al. (2004) found in their cross-cultural leadership research that transformational leadership is widely used in both Western and Asian countries and shows certain cross-cultural commonalities. However, the study also shows that although transformational leadership is widely recognized worldwide, the behavior and leadership style of leaders may be different in different cultural contexts, which has an important impact on the effectiveness of transformational leadership. House et al. (2004) found that Western culture (especially countries such as the United States and Europe) generally emphasizes individualism, equal rights and autonomy, which makes the implementation of transformational leadership pay more attention to personal motivation, innovative thinking and self-achievement. In these cultures, leaders often emphasize the effectiveness of transformational leadership by encouraging employees to innovate, challenge the status quo and set motivational goals. In this environment, transformational leadership often has the characteristics of inspiring morale, emphasizing vision and promoting innovation.

Relatively speaking, Asian culture tends to emphasize collectivism, authority and hierarchy, and this cultural background has a unique impact on the application of transformational leadership. Hofstede (1984)believe that in cultures with high power distances (such as East Asian countries), it is usually manifested as more centralized decision-making and a high degree of hierarchical relationship, while in cultures with low power distances (such as Western countries), it tends to be decentralized and more equal organizational structures. Therefore, in these cultures, the implementation of transformational leadership may focus more on maintaining team cohesion and stability, and leaders tend to adopt more authoritative guidance and decision-making methods. In this context, it is more appropriate for leaders to exert the influence of transformational leadership by showing strong moral beliefs, emphasizing collective goals, and providing personalized care for team members. Christie (2008) elaborated on the challenges encountered by South African schools in the process of educational reform: Although the goal of the reform is to provide equal education and practice opportunities, due to the historical inequality of resource distribution, many schools, especially those in rural and poor areas, lack sufficient funds, equipment and qualified teachers.

Although transformational leadership has a certain degree of universality and effectiveness in different cultural contexts, cultural differences play a vital role in the actual application of leadership behavior and leadership style. Therefore, when leaders implement transformational leadership in different cultural environments, they need to consider the impact of cultural background on leadership style, adapt to the characteristics of local culture, and ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of transformational leadership.

Specific implementation of transformational leadership

Transformational leadership provides an effective way to promote change by stimulating the intrinsic motivation of educators and students. In educational leadership, transformational leaders not only focus on improving school management and teaching quality, but also emphasize promoting the overall development of schools by shaping school culture, improving teachers' professional quality, and stimulating students' interest in learning. Leithwood & Jantzi (2000)'s research shows that transformational leadership can significantly improve school teaching quality and students' academic performance. Leaders promote school teaching reforms through clear visions, stimulate teachers' professional development, and create a positive learning environment.

Transformational leadership is not only the exclusive responsibility of principals or school leaders, it also encourages collaboration and team leadership among teachers. Stoll & Fink

(1996) believe that school improvement requires extensive collaboration, which is not only the responsibility of school leaders, but also the participation of teachers, students and parents. Gronn (2003) mentioned that transformational leadership emphasizes the leadership role of teachers in schools. Teachers promote the improvement of the overall teaching quality of schools by actively participating in school reforms, sharing teaching experiences and innovative practices. Transformational leadership not only focuses on the growth of teachers and school leaders, but also on the comprehensive development of students. Through transformational leadership, schools can provide students with more opportunities to participate and cultivate their leadership, sense of responsibility and social citizenship. Sergiovanni (1992) emphasized that transformational leaders help students take on collective responsibilities by cultivating their leadership. More responsibilities, enhance their sense of social participation and collective consciousness. This laid a theoretical foundation for the research of this paper.

Challenges and limitations of transformational leadership

Transformational leadership has been widely used in various organizations since the 1980s, especially in education, business and government. Transformational leadership emphasizes that leaders promote organizational change by motivating, inspiring vision, focusing on personal development and promoting innovation. However, despite its great significance, the role of transformational leadership in organizational change is still limited. While exploring the advantages of transformational leadership, many scholars have also pointed out the challenges and limitations of transformational leadership in practical applications.

Bass & Avolio (1996) emphasized that the performance of transformational leadership varies greatly among different leaders. Specifically, the charisma and personal traits of leaders will directly affect the performance of their transformational leadership behavior and their influence on subordinates. If the leader lacks sufficient emotional intelligence or communication skills, the effectiveness of transformational leadership will be greatly reduced. Tourish & Pinnington (2002) further believe that this reliance on the leader's personal traits may cause the organization to over-rely on the leader's personal behavior, thereby weakening the independence and innovation of team members. The leader's personalized characteristics may even evolve into a "personal worship" phenomenon, forming a potential negative impact.

In addition, transformational leadership will also have certain problems in terms of sustainability and cultural adaptability. Avolio & Bass (2001) pointed out that the success of transformational leadership depends not only on short-term incentives, but also on long-term organizational culture construction and the continuous development of employee capabilities. Without this long-term support, transformational leadership may lead to "short-term enthusiasm" of employees and fail to maintain long-term efficient operations. They also pointed out that when the cultural environment in which the leader is located emphasizes hierarchy, When there are differences in institutions and collectivism, the implementation of transformational leadership may face more challenges. Avolio & Bass (2001) discussed the adaptability of transformational leadership in different cultural contexts, pointing out that although transformational leadership is widely used in Western cultures, its leadership style may encounter different challenges in Asia, Latin America and other regions. For example, collectivist culture and culture that respects authority may not fully support the high level of participation and personal self-realization advocated by transformational leadership, which may lead to limited effectiveness of transformational leadership in these regions. The research of House et al. shows that the effectiveness of transformational leadership in these regions may be limited. (2004) further showed that although transformational leadership is promoted globally, cultural characteristics of different countries and regions, such as differences in collectivism and individualism, will affect the way leaders interact with employees. In

collectivist cultures, employees may be more inclined to obey the instructions of leaders rather than actively participate in decision-making and change.

In summary, transformational leadership has significant advantages in promoting organizational change and improving employee motivation, but it also faces multiple challenges: relying on the personal charm of the leader may lead to unstable style; excessive concentration of decision-making power weakens employee participation and innovation; long-term resource support is required, and it is difficult to see results in the short term; limited applicability in cultures that emphasize collectivism and hierarchy; may weaken employee autonomy; rely on high trust, and lack of trust may hinder change. Therefore, leaders need to flexibly adjust according to specific circumstances, overcome these limitations, and ensure the continued success of change.

2. Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is a leadership theory that has been increasingly valued in the fields of education and organizational management in recent years. Unlike the traditional centralized leadership model, distributed leadership emphasizes the decentralization of leadership responsibilities and practices, and believes that leadership is not only the responsibility of senior leaders, but also the responsibility shared by all members of the organization at different levels and in different situations. Distributed leadership advocates the sharing of leadership rights and emphasizes collective decision-making, cooperation, and collaborative innovation.

The core idea of distributed leadership is that leadership is no longer a task controlled and executed by a single individual, but a collective activity involving interaction and cooperation between different individuals in the organization. Distributed leadership emphasizes the collaboration and sharing of different roles, and believes that leadership is not limited to formal leaders, but a process throughout the entire organization. Gronn (2003) is one of the founders of distributed leadership theory. He proposed the concept of leadership distribution, pointing out that leadership is a collective behavior of multiple members in an organization, rather than a task that can be completed independently by a single leader. Gronn (2003) emphasized that leaders in decentralized organizations are better able to cope with complex environments and organizational needs. Spillane (2006) further developed the distributed leadership theory and proposed that leadership behavior should not rely solely on individual leaders but should be understood as a collective interaction process within the organization. He proposed that distributed leadership is based on the interaction between individuals, organizations, and situations. In this model, leadership is not just an individual role and behavior, but a broad collective behavior that emphasizes social interaction and collaboration.

Distributed leadership theory has been widely used in the field of education, especially in school management and educational reform. Distributed leadership in education emphasizes the participation of teachers, students, parents, and managers in school management and decision-making.

Harris (2004) showed that teachers can provide students with higher quality teaching through collective leadership and cooperation. Distributed leadership promotes a supportive and cooperative school environment, which in turn creates a better learning atmosphere for students. Teachers' enthusiasm and motivation can inspire students and enhance their learning motivation. Students have more opportunities to participate in school activities and improve their self-management skills and social responsibility. The cooperative culture promotes students' teamwork and social skills. Distributed leadership helps promote educational equity, especially in supporting disadvantaged students. Leithwood & Hopkins (2008) further confirmed the positive role of distributed leadership in educational management. Research shows that distributed leadership can enhance the transparency and democracy of school management, allowing teachers and other educators to play a greater role in the decision-

making process. This not only promotes cooperation between school management and faculty but also makes schools more democratic and inclusive in formulating policies and promoting reforms. Through this way of shared responsibility and collective decision-making, the governance effect of the school has been significantly improved, further improving the quality of education.

The difference and limitations of distributed leadership and traditional leadership

Distributed leadership is significantly different from traditional centralized leadership. Traditional leadership emphasizes the concentration of power, decision-making hierarchy and organizational instructions, while distributed leadership advocates the decentralization of power and responsibility, focusing on teamwork and consensus. Gronn (2003) pointed out that the advantage of traditional leadership lies in its clear decision-making structure and execution, while distributed leadership has stronger adaptability and flexibility, especially in complex and rapidly changing environments. Distributed leadership relies not only on individual decisionmaking, but also on collective collaboration, so it can mobilize resources from all aspects of the organization more effectively. But at the same time, there are also some problems and challenges that may be faced by distribution. Gronn (2003) pointed out that in distributed leadership, due to the lack of clear guidance from a single leader, there may be phenomena of shirking responsibility and chaotic power distribution, especially in high-pressure decisionmaking and crisis moments. The lack of a centralized decision-making mechanism may lead to inefficiency. In addition, Harris (2004) mentioned that the implementation of distributed leadership in the field of education requires sufficient resource support and systematic training, especially to establish a collaborative culture and trust relationship between teachers and management. If resources and support are insufficient, the implementation of distributed leadership may be limited.

In summary, distributed leadership, as a leadership model that emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibility, has strong adaptability and flexibility, and is particularly suitable for dealing with rapidly changing and complex environments. It can promote innovation, increase employee participation and sense of responsibility, and enhance the democracy and transparency of the organization. However, distributed leadership also faces some challenges, such as power ambiguity, cultural barriers, insufficient resources, coordination problems, etc. Therefore, the successful implementation of distributed leadership requires organizations to make appropriate adjustments in culture, structure and resources, and ensure that sufficient support and training are provided to give full play to the advantages of distributed leadership.

3.2. The role of students in educational leadership

3.2.1. Students as co-decision-makers in educational leadership

With the gradual rise of democratic education and student participation theory, the role of students as co-decision-makers in educational leadership has been theoretically supported. Cook-Sather (2006) proposed that student voice is not just an expression of opinions, but a question about how to distribute power and rights in education. Students are not only learners in the classroom, but can also play an active role in school management, policy making, curriculum design, etc. This process is called student autonomy or student leadership. Distributed leadership theory is one of the core frameworks for understanding the role of students as co-decision-makers. Spillane (2005) proposed that leadership is no longer concentrated on the principal or a single authority figure, but is dispersed throughout the school community, and every member of the school (including students) can play a leadership role in a specific environment. Distributed leadership emphasizes collective decision-making, collaboration and shared responsibility, providing a theoretical basis for students to play the role of co-decision makers in school decision-making. Democratic education theory emphasizes that students should have the right to participate in school decision-making, express their

opinions, and play an active role in the educational process. Mitra (2014) proposed that a cooperative relationship should be established between students and adults (teachers, school leaders, parents, etc.) rather than the traditional one-way directive relationship. The role of adults is not just authority and decision makers, they should become supporters and partners in student development. Mager & Nowak (2012) regards student participation in education as an important way to improve the quality of education, increase the transparency of school governance, and promote the development of students' sense of responsibility and social skills. Students can participate in decision-making at multiple levels, including school policies, curriculum design, classroom management, and daily school activities.

Dewey (1916) proposed that education should be an interactive process, and students should not just passively accept knowledge, but should actively participate in learning and school management. Under this concept, the role of students as co-decision makers of educational leadership is recognized and emphasized, and schools, as democratic social units, should give students more decision-making power. Brasof (2015)'s research shows that when students actively participate in school decision-making, they can not only improve their leadership skills but also increase their sense of identity and responsibility for the school. Student participation can help school administrators understand students' needs more realistically, promote school reforms that are more in line with students' actual needs, and improve the overall culture and teaching quality of the school. Brasof (2015) pointed out that leadership responsibilities should be shared between students and adults, that is, students and adults make major school decisions together. Brooman & Darwent & Pimor (2015) emphasized the importance of student voice in assisting higher education curriculum design and proposed that incorporating students into the curriculum design process can help improve teaching quality, meet student needs, and promote educational innovation. This collaborative governance helps promote fairness and inclusiveness in the school environment and ensures that decisions consider student needs and perspectives. Students should play an active role in school governance. Brasof (2015) also explored student participation in schools in the form of student unions and school advisory committees and explained the decision-making role of students in these organizations and how these decisions affect school management and education quality. Student participation is also important in classroom management and curriculum design. Teachers can understand students' feedback on teaching content, methods and progress through dialogue and consultation with students, so as to adjust teaching strategies and content to a certain extent. Student-led learning is a typical form of practice. Students not only participate in classroom discussions, but sometimes also lead discussions, design topics or lead group projects. Such participation not only improves students' sense of responsibility but also stimulates their creativity and autonomous learning ability (Mitra, 2004). Jenkins (2006) also proposed that science education is not just about imparting knowledge, but should focus on how students understand, experience and participate in the process of scientific learning. Students' voices can help teachers and schools discover problems in current science education, especially students' interest in and understanding of science courses and the difficulties they encounter in the learning process. Incorporating student voices into science education can help improve the design of course content and make it closer to students' actual needs. For example, through student feedback, the difficulty of the course, teaching methods and classroom activities can be adjusted to better promote students' understanding and participation.

Challenges

Although there are many benefits to student participation in school decision-making, students, especially younger students, often lack sufficient experience and maturity to understand complex educational issues and their long-term impact. Students may have limited knowledge of school policies and educational resources and therefore may face the problem of insufficient ability when participating in decision-making. Mitra (2004) mentioned in his research that

although cultivating student leadership has a significant positive impact on students, students often lack sufficient decision-making background and knowledge to participate in in-depth school governance decisions. When decisions involve complex issues such as education budgets and policy making, student participation may be limited. Furman & Gruenewald (2004) emphasized that although cultivating student leadership helps to enhance their sense of social responsibility, whether students can effectively participate in decision-making often depends on the support and training provided by the school. Without sufficient knowledge, preparation and guidance, students may not be mature enough in the decision-making process. Veugelers & De Kat (2002) also showed that although schools can set up student representative mechanisms and feedback channels, the degree of student participation may be affected by a variety of factors. For example, students may lack sufficient expression skills or lack sufficient motivation to participate in these conversations.

In addition, adult leaders in schools are sometimes skeptical about student participation, believing that students lack sufficient experience and maturity to make wise decisions. Therefore, school administrators may be reluctant to fully adopt students' opinions, or even if they do, they often lack the strength to implement them. The low acceptance of students' voices by adults has become a major obstacle for students to serve as co-decision-makers in educational leadership. Harris' (2004) research shows that adults often believe that the value of students' participation in school governance is limited, especially in the key decision-making process of educational reform and school management, which leads to low influence of students' opinions and affects the promotion of democratic governance in schools. Spillane (2006) mentioned that although the distributed educational leadership model emphasizes cooperation between different stakeholders, in many schools, institutional barriers (such as management regulations, decision-making processes, etc.) limit students' participation. Even if students are supported to participate in decision-making in theory, they are often constrained by administrative barriers in practice. Brasof (2015) also pointed out that although many schools have begun to try student co-decision-making, they still face resistance from the traditional management structure of the school, especially when the specific model and mechanism of student participation in decision-making are imperfect, students' opinions are often difficult to be fully adopted. Students as co-decision-makers of educational leadership are an important manifestation of educational democratization. Cook-Sather (2013) proposed that students' voices can help researchers move away from a teacher-centered perspective and focus on students as the subjects and beneficiaries of educational activities. Their experiences can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the education system. By involving students in decision-making processes such as school governance and curriculum design, it is not only possible to enhance students' leadership and civic awareness, but also to improve the efficiency and transparency of school governance. However, to achieve this goal, schools need to overcome challenges such as power structure, student ability, and adult attitudes, provide necessary support and training, and ensure that students can effectively participate in the decision-making process and truly become co-decision makers of educational leadership.

In summary, as co-decision makers of educational leadership, students can have an important impact in many areas such as school governance, curriculum design, and policy making. Student participation not only helps to improve the fairness and inclusiveness of education, but also cultivates students' leadership, sense of responsibility, and civic awareness. However, in actual operations, the depth and breadth of student participation in decision-making are often constrained by challenges such as power structure, adult acceptance, and students' own abilities. In order to promote the role of students as co-decision makers, schools need to innovate in system design, educational culture and teacher training, provide more support and opportunities, and enable students to play a greater role in educational leadership, thereby promoting the overall improvement of school governance and education quality.

3.2.2. Students as agents of change

The role of students in the education system is not limited to receiving knowledge. As global education reform continues to deepen, students have gradually become an important driver of education reform. Students' voices, actions, leadership and participation play an important role in promoting education policies, curriculum reforms, school culture and social justice. Fielding (2011) believes that student voices are the driving force of education reform. Educational reform should not rely solely on the decision-making of the government or the education administration. As the key subject in the education system, students should have sufficient voice and participation. From historical student movements to modern digital participation, student groups have always been an important force for educational change. Dewey (1916) proposed that education should be an interactive process, and students should not only passively accept knowledge, but should actively participate in learning and school management. Under this concept, the role of students as co-decision-makers in educational leadership is recognized and emphasized, and schools, as a democratic social unit, should give students more decision-making power. Quaglia & Corso (2014) believe that student voice should be regarded as a tool for change, which can help school systems, teaching methods, school culture and other aspects to make necessary reforms. This chapter aims to review the research literature on students as promoters of educational change in recent years, explore the multiple roles of students in educational change and their influencing factors, and analyze the main trends and challenges of current research. Fletcher (2005) also proposed that students can play a role in promoting social change and paying attention to social justice through participation in reform, thereby cultivating their sense of social responsibility.

Cook (2002) believes that there are various forms and paths for students to participate in education reform, and the main form is student participation in education reform. The importance of student participation in education policy making is becoming increasingly prominent, especially in the fields of higher education, tuition, admission opportunities and curriculum design. Students participate in education reform through student unions, education committees and social movements, promoting social attention to education equity and quality. For example, student unions often express opinions on issues such as tuition, curriculum and school management inside and outside the school to promote policy adjustments. Cook (2013) emphasized that student experience is not just the background or data source of education reform, but students should be regarded as "core participants" in education reform. She believes that student voice is crucial to education reform because students are direct beneficiaries and practitioners of the education system. By involving students in educational research and school decision-making, they can provide valuable first-hand experience and experience that can directly influence education policies and practices. For example, students can directly influence the reform of teaching content and methods by participating in course evaluation, providing feedback, and participating in teaching design. Mitra (2006) emphasized that student voice not only refers to students' right to express opinions and needs, but also includes students' active participation in school life, especially in the process of decisionmaking and policy formation. The increase in student voices is an important way to promote educational change, improve the school environment and improve learning outcomes. She pointed out that students' participation in classroom and school management can promote their sense of responsibility and self-efficacy, thus laying the foundation for their long-term development. Levin (2008) also believes that educational reform requires the joint efforts of all parties, and students are an indispensable part of it. By involving students in the reform process, the education system can better respond to students' needs and challenges, thereby achieving a more inclusive and equitable education. **Global Research**

Mayaba&Ralarala& Angu (2018) studied South African college students and found that students' voices can help educators recognize the diversity needs in the educational process. especially in a multilingual and multicultural environment. By expressing their needs and opinions, students can help promote educational policy reforms, especially language and cultural reforms. Trowler et al. (2018) also studied the implementation of students as change agents in a regional manner. He found that student participation has become part of British education policy. Many schools involve students in school management and reform by establishing student parliaments and participating in curriculum design. Studies have shown that such participation can enhance students' self-confidence, leadership, and improve the overall atmosphere of the school. Fielding & Bragg (2003) also studied the reform of secondary education in the UK and proposed that students should not only be recipients of the educational process but also become active promoters of educational reform. By participating in research, students can better understand and improve their learning environment, enhance their sense of self-efficacy, provide an important practical basis for educational reform, and actively participate in the design and implementation of educational research to promote educational change. Trowler et al. (2018)'s research in Finland showed that Finnish students not only have a greater voice in the classroom but also can participate in a wider range of educational reforms. Students are regarded as collaborators in the educational process, not just beneficiaries. Finland's practice shows that students' voices can have a profound impact at the educational policy level. American education reform pays more attention to student feedback and datadriven decision-making. Student participation in campus culture construction, curriculum evaluation, school policy formulation, etc. not only enhances students' sense of responsibility, but also helps education managers better understand students' real needs, thereby promoting the implementation of educational reform.

Challenges of students as change agents

Flutter & Rudduck (2004) explored the role of student voices in school reform, focusing on the challenges faced by schools in seeking student feedback and implementing changes. Research shows that the power gap between students and teachers and administrators is one of the main obstacles to student participation in the change process. Although students sometimes participate in certain decision-making processes or provide feedback, the final decision is often dominated by teachers and school management. In this context of unequal power, students' voices often cannot have a significant impact on decision-making. When listening to students' opinions, school administrators and teachers usually tend to rely on their own experience and expertise to make decisions, rather than relying entirely on student feedback. Rudduck & McIntyre (2007) hold a similar view. They believe that although schools solicit students' opinions through student committees or questionnaires, such participation is often more symbolic than substantive. Students' voices may not really affect the core decisions of the school or changes in educational practices. Due to the limited understanding and attention of school management to student participation, they often regard students' voices as a formal task rather than a key factor in promoting decision-making or changes in educational practices.

In addition, Young (2002) also pointed out that the power structure in the education system often excludes students' voices, especially those from disadvantaged groups. Even if these students are willing to participate in reforms, their voices are often marginalized or ignored. On the other hand, the lack of democratic educational practices is also a problem. Although democratic education theory emphasizes that students should be active participants in the decision-making process, in many traditional education systems, student participation is often seen as unnecessary or inappropriate, and there is a lack of opportunities and channels for actual participation in change.

In summary, the main challenges faced by students as change agents include power asymmetry, low symbolic equal participation, the exclusive structure of the education system, the lack of democratic education practices, and resistance from teachers and management. Students' voices are often ignored due to the power gap. Although opinions can be solicited through student committees or questionnaires, these participations are usually formal and lack substantive impact. The exclusive structure of the education system, especially the neglect of students from disadvantaged groups, also makes it difficult for students to truly participate in decision-making. In addition, traditional education lacks an effective democratic participation mechanism, and teachers and management often resist student participation due to doubts about students' abilities or uncertainty about reforms. These challenges severely limit students' influence in education reform.

3.2.3. Students as leaders (student leadership)

Student leadership, as an important part of education reform, has received widespread attention in recent years. Students are not only the main body of learning, but also important participants in school decision-making and change. MacBeath (2011) believes that education should not only focus on cultivating "geniuses" who conform to a certain cultural value but should provide each student with development opportunities that suit their unique potential, so that talents can be freely displayed in different fields and contexts. Mozhgan et al. (2011) emphasized that student leadership is a core factor in students' personal development. It not only affects students' performance in school but also plays an important role in their future careers. The cultivation of student leadership can help students better cope with challenges in life and careers and enhance their social responsibility and teamwork skills. Dempster&Lizzio (2007) proposed that student leadership is not just a management role or position in school but refers to the ability of students to actively take responsibility, motivate others and influence the behavior of others in the school community. Student leadership emphasizes students' initiative, responsibility and collaboration in the learning environment.

In many literatures, student leadership is seen as a tool to promote social change and community responsibility. Students not only play a leadership role in school but also have a positive impact on the wider society and the world (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). Student leadership not only refers to the ability to organize and manage others, but also emphasizes students' growth in self-leadership, self-management, and self-reflection (Bennis, 2009). This is particularly important for improving students' self-efficacy and sense of responsibility. Peer leadership emphasizes the influence of students among their peers, especially in the classroom or school environment, where students can demonstrate leadership by helping classmates, organizing activities, and providing support (Keenan, 2014). Peer leadership is not limited to formal positions such as class monitors or club leaders but is more reflected in students' daily behavior patterns and the positive impact on others. This type of leadership encourages students to take the initiative, show responsibility, and lead by example to create a supportive and collaborative learning environment. By leading by example, students can inspire their peers to become more engaged, responsible, and active. Hoffman et el. (2008) believes that student leadership plays an important role in IPE because it encourages students to become active participants in the team rather than passive recipients. Through leadership roles, students can promote collaboration among team members and promote effective communication. When students take on leadership roles, they typically develop a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to team outcomes, which not only helps improve the quality of learning but also lays the foundation for their future careers.

Many schools develop student leadership through service-learning projects and community service, providing students with opportunities to apply leadership in the real world. Service-learning not only helps students build a sense of responsibility but also enhances their teamwork and communication skills. In these projects, students not only lead themselves, but also work with others to promote positive changes in the community and school (Billig, 2000). Through these activities, students learn how to plan, organize, and execute projects that meet

real needs while learning how to work with different groups. This hands-on approach enables students to develop their leadership potential while making tangible changes to the community, further reinforcing the idea that leadership is about service, collaboration, and making a positive impact. Lambert (2006) believes that student leadership can greatly influence the culture of a school, especially the culture of student participation. She points out that encouraging student leadership helps build a more inclusive, cooperative, and supportive school atmosphere. In this atmosphere, students can actively participate in all aspects of the school, thereby providing momentum for the long-term development and continuous improvement of the school. Lizzio & Wilson (2009)studied on student leadership in college also showed that the sense of efficacy of student representatives is crucial to their enthusiasm and participation in the decision-making process. In order to enhance students' sense of participation, universities should provide clear role definitions, effective training and support, and create a more cooperative and power-sharing environment.

More and more schools are beginning to encourage student-led projects, especially those involving social justice, environmental protection and other fields. Students can learn how to play a leadership role in a broader social and cultural context by planning and implementing these projects (Furco, 1996). The development of student leadership helps to improve students' self-efficacy, that is, trust and control over their own abilities. Studies have shown that students who take on leadership roles tend to show higher self-confidence and decision-making ability, which has an important impact on their future academic and career (Bandura, 1997). Student leadership, especially in service learning and community participation projects, shows a strong sense of social responsibility.

Although many schools hope to cultivate student leadership, students are often marginalized in school decision-making. School decision-making is usually dominated by teachers and administrators, and students' voices are difficult to be fully heard. Teachers and administrators may believe that students lack the necessary experience and expertise, resulting in the failure of students' leadership and voices to play a substantive role in education reform and school management (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). Student leadership participation is often limited to the surface. Many times, students are invited to participate in activities and decision-making, but this participation is often only symbolic and lacks actual power. Many schools' student unions or leadership teams formally participate in decision-making, but the final decision-making power and execution power are often still in the hands of school administrators (Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). Effective student leadership training requires not only opportunities and platforms provided by schools, but also resource support. Many schools do not provide sufficient training, guidance and financial support in student leadership programs, which limits the development space for students in leadership training (Keenan, 2014).

The cultivation of student leadership is an important part of the modern education system. By cultivating student leadership, it can not only help students improve their sense of self-efficacy, social responsibility and civic awareness, but also promote educational reform and social change in schools. However, the implementation of student leadership still faces many challenges, including school power structure, suppression of student voices, insufficient resources, and limitations of students' own abilities. Therefore, future education reforms need to pay more attention to the cultivation of student leadership, provide more opportunities and support, and ensure that students play a greater role in decision-making and change processes.

3.3. Youth Education Leadership

Leadership research has gone through several stages, from the early "leadership trait theory" to the later "behavioral theory" and "situational leadership theory", each of which has contributed to the theoretical framework for the development of youth education leadership. Leadership trait theory focuses on the innate qualities and characteristics of leaders, laying the

foundation for understanding leadership as a set of personal attributes. On the other hand, behavioral theory shifts the focus to the observable behaviors and actions of leaders, emphasizing that leadership is not only about traits, but also about the behavior of leaders in different situations. Situational leadership theory further proposes the view that effective leadership depends on the context and the specific needs of the current group or task, indicating that leaders must act according to different situations. The transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978) emphasizes that leaders achieve higher collective goals by motivating and inspiring their subordinates. The theory emphasizes the importance of leadership in motivating others to transcend their own interests and pursue greater interests, focusing on values, vision and empowering followers. Transformational leadership is particularly effective in helping young people develop a sense of purpose, self-efficacy and the ability to inspire others, making it an ideal approach to cultivating youth leadership. By encouraging young people to connect with a broader vision and inspire their peers, transformational leadership helps them realize their potential to create positive change.

The servant leadership theory proposed by Greenleaf (2007) believes that the core of leadership is to serve others. It emphasizes empathy, responsibility and commitment to the growth and well-being of others, especially those in vulnerable groups. This approach is essential for cultivating youth leadership because it teaches young people the importance of listening, understanding and responding to the needs of others. In school and community service activities, young people can directly experience the value of serving others and leading the collective through their own actions. By practicing servant leadership, young people learn to promote cooperation, encourage the development of others, and lead in a humble and purposeful way. This leadership style is particularly effective in helping students develop strong interpersonal skills, social responsibility, and a deep commitment to the community.

Adolescence is a period of highly developed cognitive, emotional, and social skills. Educators need to consider the psychological and developmental characteristics of the adolescent stage. Piaget (2003) believed that adolescents are in the "formal operational stage" and have abstract thinking and critical judgment abilities, which provide a cognitive basis for their leadership practice. At the same time, the identity theory proposed by Erikson (1968) emphasizes that adolescents are the subjects of leadership practice. Adolescents form their self-identity at this stage and shape themselves through social interaction and leadership experience. Therefore, leadership training in education should focus on the psychological maturity and social responsibility of adolescent individuals. Bandura (1997) emphasized that individuals can learn new skills by observing and imitating others. In school environments and community activities, adolescents gradually learn leadership skills and social behaviors by observing the behaviors of their peers, teachers, and leaders. Therefore, leadership training in youth education is not only theoretical teaching, but can also be achieved through social practice, role model demonstration, and feedback.

Channels for leadership training in youth education

Many schools and educational institutions provide young people with opportunities to practice leadership by organizing student unions, community activities, and volunteer services. Studies have shown that when students serve as student union or class leaders, they can learn how to make decisions, coordinate resources, communicate, and resolve conflicts (Dugan & Komives, 2010). In addition, young people learn to divide labor and cooperate and lead together in group activities. These experiences lay the foundation for them to play a leadership role on a larger scale in the future. Cooperative learning and team projects provide young people with a platform to simulate actual leadership situations. In this process, young people exercise coordination, communication, leadership, and negotiation skills by working with others, while also cultivating team spirit and problem-solving skills (Zeldin et al., 2017). These activities not only help young people improve their personal leadership skills but also strengthen their role

recognition as group leaders. In addition, community service is one of the important ways to cultivate leadership in youth education. Youniss & Yates (1997) pointed out that by participating in volunteer activities and social services, young people can enhance their sense of social responsibility and understand the meaning of leadership through practical actions. In the process of serving others and organizing community activities, young people can develop organizational and management skills, and gradually develop the ability to make decisions, take responsibility and lead a team. In addition, social emotional learning (SEL) helps young people develop strong leadership skills when participating in community service by emphasizing the cultivation of empathy, emotional management and responsibility (Cohen & Sandy, 2007). Challenges of youth education and leadership development

In areas or schools with relatively scarce resources, youth leadership development is often limited by economy, facilities and teachers. Lack of sufficient practice opportunities and guidance may cause some young people to miss the opportunity to develop leadership. Therefore, how to provide effective leadership development opportunities with limited resources is an urgent problem to be solved in current education reform. Therefore, Dimmock & Walker (2005) believe that educational leaders need to have cultural adaptability and innovation, especially in resource-limited environments. Through the integration of creative educational methods and cultural diversity, educational leaders can make up for the lack of resources and provide students with better leadership development opportunities.

In some cultural contexts, youth leadership is often constrained by gender, class and social expectations. For example, some traditional cultures may underestimate the leadership potential of women or minority youth. Gender stereotypes may make it difficult for female or minority adolescents to obtain equal opportunities for school leadership positions, thereby limiting their leadership development (Larson & Angus, 2011). Therefore, educators need to pay attention to gender and cultural factors to create a more equitable and inclusive leadership development environment. Students' willingness and motivation to participate in leadership programs are often influenced by personal interests and external support. In some educational environments, students may lack the motivation to actively participate in leadership development, especially when there are no clear rewards or links to further education or employment opportunities. In addition, many students may not be clear about the long-term benefits of leadership development for their careers and personal development. Student leadership is often regarded as a secondary content outside of academic performance, resulting in a lack of systematic and continuous leadership development (Skalicky et al., 2020).

In summary, the cultivation of youth education leadership faces many challenges, especially in terms of resources, institutional culture, and evaluation mechanisms. The education system needs more innovation and adjustment, from changing the traditional academic focus to student-centered education, and then to student-centered education. From providing diversified leadership practice opportunities to overcoming the inequality caused by socioeconomic gaps. These challenges require not only the joint efforts of education policy makers and school leaders, but also the broad support of all sectors of society. Especially in resource-poor environments, how to provide equal and effective leadership development opportunities is an important issue that needs to be urgently addressed in current education reforms.

3.4. **Student Empowerment Theory**

Student empowerment theory is an educational theory that aims to enable students to play a greater role in learning and life by giving them more decision-making power, responsibility and participation opportunities. The core of student empowerment is to help students become active participants in the educational process, rather than just passive recipients of education. This paper will review and analyze in detail the background, core concepts, key research and

practical applications of student empowerment theory, especially the specific practice in youth education, and summarize the relevant literature.

The origins of student empowerment theory can be traced back to the fields of sociology, psychology and education in the mid-20th century, and are particularly influenced by critical pedagogy, democratic education theory and self-determination theory. Freire (1970) proposed that education is not only the imparting of knowledge, but also a process of social liberation. Through education, students gain an understanding of their own situation and learn to challenge unequal social structures. He emphasized that education should enable students to become active and critical learners, rather than just accepting the teachings of the existing power structure. Freire&Shore (1978) emphasized the dominant position of students in the educational process and advocated equal dialogue and interaction between teachers and students. Johnson and Johnson (1987) had a profound impact on student empowerment. Dewey (1916) believed that education is not only the imparting of knowledge, but also a process of participation. Students should play a role in the educational process, participate in educational decision-making, and establish their own knowledge system through practice. He believed that education is the foundation of a democratic society, and students are a vital part of this process. Ryan & Deci (2000) believes that giving individuals autonomy and decisionmaking power has a vital impact on their learning motivation. The theory emphasizes that students can independently choose tasks, goals and learning methods in the educational process, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation and improving learning outcomes. Empowerment is directly related to students' autonomy. Students can enhance their sense of self-efficacy, self-confidence and learning motivation by controlling the content, methods and rhythm of learning.

Student empowerment in classroom teaching

Classroom teaching is one of the most widely used areas for student empowerment. Through empowerment practices in the classroom, students can not only better master knowledge, but also cultivate autonomous learning, critical thinking and cooperation abilities in the educational process. One of the core concepts of student empowerment is to make students the subject of learning rather than passive recipients. For example, Shor (2012) proposed (studentled learning), that is, students actively explore knowledge through group discussions, project learning, etc., and teachers play a more guiding role. This method emphasizes students' initiative and autonomy and promotes students' critical thinking and innovation. Johnson & Johnson (1987) pointed out that in cooperative learning, students can improve their sense of self-efficacy and cultivate important social and teamwork skills by helping each other and solving problems together. In this way of learning, students are both learners of knowledge and participants in teaching, and they deepen their understanding by teaching their peers. Zimmerman (2002) mentioned that by participating in self-assessment and reflection, students can have a clearer understanding of their learning process and goals. This method gives students more control over their learning process, thereby enhancing their sense of responsibility and initiative. Through self-reflection, students can actively adjust their learning strategies, thereby improving their academic performance and mental health. In addition to the academic field, student empowerment is also widely used in extracurricular activities. Many schools help students develop leadership, social skills and teamwork skills through extracurricular activities, providing students with more opportunities for independent choice and self-management. Student leadership development is an important part of empowerment practice. Schools help students exercise leadership by organizing leadership training camps, volunteer service projects, student clubs, etc., so that students can develop leadership in real social environments. Zeldin et al. (2013) pointed out in their research that students who participate in leadership programs can not only develop leadership skills but also enhance their

sense of self-efficacy and social responsibility. These experiences have an important impact on students' future careers.

Challenges in student empowerment practice

Tatum (2017) studied racial issues in education and discussed the relationship between student empowerment and racial equality. She believes that the power structure in education often excludes students from different backgrounds, especially minority students. Although these students may have a strong desire to participate in decision-making and reform, their voices are often ignored. Racial discrimination and cultural bias in the education system are a major challenge to student empowerment practice. Fielding & Rudduck (2002) emphasized that unequal power relations in education often lead to students' voices being ignored or marginalized. Real change is not just about allowing students to participate in school management or classroom decision-making, but to fundamentally change the power structure in education so that students can have more equal opportunities to participate at all levels. Students are not just objects of education but should be partners in the educational process. Liasidou (2012) discussed the moral turn in inclusive education, especially the role of power and justice in education. She pointed out that although student empowerment emphasizes educational equity and democracy, power inequality and institutionalized discrimination in the education system limit the participation opportunities of students, especially marginalized groups in society. Despite advocating student empowerment, we are still faced with deeprooted prejudices and exclusion structures in school culture. Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive reform of the education system, not only to provide students with more opportunities to participate, but also to truly achieve the democratization of education and student empowerment through training, policy support and cultural transformation.

4. Recommendations and conclusion

This study takes the role of students in educational leadership as the research object, and mainly explores how students can play an active role in educational decision-making, teaching improvement, school culture construction, etc. Through theoretical analysis and literature review, the core role of students in educational leadership and its influence are partially summarized, providing useful inspiration for educational practice.

4.1. Recommendations

4.1.1. The core role of students in educational leadership

The role of students in educational leadership is multidimensional. First, they participate in the school's educational decision-making and management as co-decision-makers. This role enables students to express their needs and opinions and influence the school's teaching direction and cultural construction. Secondly, as promoters of change, students actively participate in curriculum design, teaching improvement and school culture construction, and promote innovation and improvement of the school environment. Finally, students can also play a leading role as leaders in organizations such as classes, clubs, and student unions, influence their peers, and drive collective action.

4.1.2. The active role of students in the school leadership structure

Many studies have shown that students can play an active role in the school's leadership structure, especially in schools with student participation mechanisms. Through student self-government organizations, school affairs committees, etc., students can not only participate in daily management, but also express opinions and suggestions in school decision-making, and influence the school's educational policies and practices.

4.1.3. Students' performance in specific practice

The performance of students in participating in school decision-making, curriculum design, and organizing educational activities shows that their participation can improve the transparency and democracy of school management. Students demonstrate their potential as educational leaders by organizing activities, formulating curriculum suggestions, and participating in school culture construction, promoting innovation and change in all aspects of the school.

4.1.4. The impact of student leadership on school management efficiency

The above studies show that student leadership can improve school management efficiency. Through student participation, school management is more transparent, flexible, and innovative. Through feedback mechanisms, democratic decision-making, and specific implementation, it helps schools discover and solve problems, improve school management efficiency, and improve education quality.

4.1.5. The impact of cultural background on student leadership

The practice of student leadership varies in different cultural and educational backgrounds. For example, in some countries where the culture attaches more importance to teacher authority, the role of student leadership may be more restricted, while in an education system that emphasizes student autonomy, there is more room for student leadership. Therefore, educational policies and school culture play an important role in the practice of student leadership. I Role in cultivating student leadership.

4.1.6. Theoretical support for student leadership

Distributed leadership theory and empowerment theory can effectively explain the phenomenon of student leadership. Distributed leadership theory emphasizes the decentralization and collaboration of leadership, while empowerment theory focuses on the subjectivity and participation of students in the educational process. Both provide a theoretical framework for the role of students in educational leadership and support students to achieve educational leadership through collective collaboration and personal empowerment.

4.2. Conclusion

1. Clarify the role of students in educational leadership

Schools should clarify the role of students in educational leadership and encourage students to take more responsibilities in school management and teaching activities. Schools canBy setting up student committees and school affairs decision-making groups, students can be involved in major school decisions to enhance their leadership awareness and sense of responsibility.

2. Cultivate students' leadership and self-confidence

Education departments and schools should help students develop necessary leadership skills, such as decision-making, communication and teamwork, by designing challenging leadership programs and training courses. At the same time, by providing successful leadership role models, students' leadership potential and self-confidence can be stimulated.

3. Strengthen cooperation and interaction between students and teachers

4. The improvement of student leadership requires not only the efforts of students themselves, but also the support and guidance of teachers. Teachers should encourage students to put forward innovative opinions and suggestions by giving students more responsibilities and autonomy. At the same time, teachers can help students improve their leadership skills in practice through guidance and feedback.

5. Build an educational policy and cultural environment that supports student leadership At the policy level, the government and education departments should formulate clear policies to support students' participation and leadership in the educational process. In terms of school

culture, schools should create an inclusive and democratic environment, encourage students to express their ideas and opinions, and promote students' educational leadership.

6. Promote cross-cultural exchanges and comparative studies

Student leadership varies in different cultural contexts. Therefore, schools should encourage cross-cultural exchanges and learning, learn from the successful experiences of different countries and regions, and provide students with a broader leadership development platform. Educational researchers should also conduct cross-cultural research, analyze the impact of different cultures on student leadership, and provide references for educational policy making. 6. Pay attention to student empowerment and educational equity

Student empowerment can not only improve students' leadership skills but also promote educational equity. Schools should pay attention to the empowerment needs of students from different backgrounds, design a more inclusive and equitable educational environment, and ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop leadership in school. By creating more opportunities for participation, schools can help students fully realize their potential in the educational process and promote educational equity and quality. In addition, empowering students can encourage them to actively participate in their own learning and cultivate their sense of ownership of education, thereby distributing opportunities for success more equitably. In an inclusive educational environment, students are encouraged to express their voices, participate in the decision-making process, and actively shape the school culture. This helps to bridge the gap caused by socioeconomic, cultural and institutional barriers, making the educational experience more relevant and meaningful for all students. Ultimately, student empowerment can not only enhance individual leadership but also promote a more just and democratic education system, benefiting the entire school community.

7. Further explore the practical applicability of the theoretical framework

The distributed leadership theory and empowerment theory mentioned in the study can effectively explain the phenomenon of student leadership, but their applicability and limitations in different educational contexts still need to be further explored. Schools and educational researchers should constantly examine the actual effects of these theories, adjust and optimize them according to specific circumstances, so as to better support the development of student leadership.

Research on the role of students in educational leadership provides us with a new perspective, helping us realize that students are not only beneficiaries of education, but also participants in education. They can also become promoters of educational reform and development. By rationally designing educational policies, creating a supportive school culture, and cultivating student leadership, we can provide students with more leadership opportunities and promote innovation and progress in education. In the future, with the further development of student leadership theory and practice, the field of education will usher in more dynamic and innovative changes.

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