EFFECTIVE TEACHER LEADERSHIP MODEL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS IN ZHEJIANG PROVINCE*

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are: 1) to examine the level of teacher leadership in special education schools in Zhejiang Province; 2) to perform confirmatory factor analysis of teacher leadership in these institutions; and 3) to propose a model of effective teacher leadership tailored for special education schools in Zhejiang Province. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The quantitative component utilizes a cross-sectional survey design, employing a revised five-point scale questionnaire consisting of 141 measurement items. The effective sample size comprises 550 special education teachers across 90 special education schools in Zhejiang Province. The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews conducted with 9 teachers from 9 different special education schools in the region. Additionally, 3 experts in the field of special education provided revisions to the language and context of the adapted scale,

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while a panel of 5 experts conducted Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) assessments.

The research findings indicate that: 1) the investigation into an effective teacher leadership model for special education schools in Zhejiang Province identifies seven key aspects: Ethical Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Collaborative Leadership, Classroom Management, Research Competence, Assessment Practice, and Participatory Decision-Making, with the current management level generally assessed as high; 2) the results of model creation and applicability testing demonstrate that its applicability meets standard levels; and 3) evaluations of the model's feasibility and practicality indicate that both aspects also meet standard levels.

Keywords: model, special education, teacher leadership, special education teacher

Introduction

Special education is a crucial component of China's education system, responsible for educating and nurturing individuals with special needs (Wang & Zhang, 2020). Despite the consistent development of special education in China and the ongoing curriculum reform, the management of special education schools continues to face challenges characterized by outdated practices and oversimplifications. Zarate et al. (2023) note that the current literature lacks a clear understanding of teacher leadership, particularly within the realm of special education. Furthermore, Thompson (2017) argues that, in light of policy trends and recent developments, the field of special education leadership requires further investigation. special education teacher leadership remains in its infancy, both in China and globally, and currently lacks a systematic, standardized theoretical framework and empirical studies.

The daily responsibilities of special education require teachers to collaborate closely with various stakeholders, including general education teachers, parents, and school administrators. Research indicates that special education teachers must possess team leadership and conflict management skills, as effective interdisciplinary collaboration significantly enhances learning outcomes for special education students (Borg & Drange, 2019). These teacher leaders not only motivate their colleagues to refine their educational practices but also play a pivotal role in fostering school-wide collaboration and continuous improvement within special education environments (Paulsrud & Nilholm, 2023). In the context of Chinese educational culture, the development of teacher leadership presents unique challenges and opportunities, playing an indispensable role in the field of special education (Clark et al., 2022). Influenced by Confucian educational thought, Chinese teacher leadership emphasizes the significance of teachers as role models and moral exemplars, particularly focusing on enhancing their intrinsic motivation to foster professional development. In China, teacher leadership highlights inherent qualities, perceived as the capacity of teachers to self-manage, lead, and influence others. It is manifested as a holistic quality that integrates control, creativity, initiative, and charisma (Wan, 2024). Furthermore, Chinese schools typically adopt a bureaucratic management system. Traditional school management structures prioritize administrative control and hierarchical oversight, often neglecting the professional autonomy and leadership potential of teachers (Shengnan & Hallinger, 2021).

Exploring effective teacher leadership models in special education is crucial, as it not only enhances teachers' professionalism but also optimizes the special education environment. This initiative addresses the shortcomings in the career development of special education teachers. Consequently, this study aims to construct an effective teacher leadership model tailored for special

education schools in Zhejiang Province, with the hope of offering a valuable reference for the advancement of special education.

Objectives

1. To study the level of teacher leadership in special education schools in Zhejiang Province.

2. To study confirmatory factor analysis teacher leadership in special education schools in Zhejiang Province.

3. To propose a model of effective teacher leadership for special education schools in Zhejiang Province.

Literature review

1. The Evolution of Teacher Leadership

Although teacher leadership is a relatively new concept in many countries, its roots can be traced back to at least the early 20th century (Nelson, 1963). Many scholars argue that the term "teacher leadership" emerged in the 1970s. In his book "Teacher Leadership: A Model for Change," Andrew (1974) addressed issues similar to those considered by contemporary teacher leaders and described comparable characteristics.

This evolutionary process reflects a continuous expansion of role functions, the boundaries of connotation, and the forms of practice (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Eckert et al., 2016; Zhao, 2021). The stages of this evolution are as follows: Stage 1: Teachers assume formal leadership positions, focusing on school operational efficiency; Stage 2: Teachers concentrate on professional development, becoming curriculum and peer leaders; Stage 3: Teachers demonstrate distributed leadership and collaboration within the organizational culture; Stage 4: Teachers advance to the education policy level, becoming reform advocates and policy participants.

As educational contexts become increasingly complex, teacher leadership has expanded to include policy engagement. Teachers influence not only the classroom and school environment but also actively participate in the formulation and implementation of national and local education policies, thereby becoming key drivers of 21st-century education reform (Eckert et al., 2016; Zhao, 2021). The role of teacher leadership has evolved from managing a single subject or department to becoming a vital force that enhances the overall educational quality of schools and supports the professional development of teachers. In this dynamic landscape, teacher leaders must possess not only profound professional knowledge and teaching skills in their subject areas but also an interdisciplinary perspective and the capacity to lead teams while promoting the professional growth of their colleagues.

2. Dimensions of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership is a multifaceted concept that encompasses not only teachers' professional competence in instruction but also their influence on school organization, collaboration, and student development.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) categorized the Teacher Leadership Culture Scale into three fundamental dimensions: teacher collaboration, management support, and a supportive work environment. Muijs and Harris (2003) proposed that teacher leadership encompasses four dimensions: the application of school improvement principles within the classroom; serving as an assistant to leaders in processes of change and development; acting as a communicator and negotiator in school development; and engaging in mutual learning through close relationships with colleagues. Xie et al. (2021) developed a theoretical model of teacher leadership, categorizing it into six dimensions: collaborative leadership, professional learning leadership, assessment leadership, instructional leadership, community leadership, and policy leadership.

Liu and Bubpha (2005) categorized the leadership development model of university teachers into four distinct types: Moral Leadership, Teaching Leadership, Research Leadership, and Team Leadership. Harris and Muijs (2004) identify key components of teacher leadership, which include participation in decision-making, instructional leadership, professional development, collaboration and teamwork, mediation and resource support, as well as relationship and culture building. Wei (2020) defines the professional skills of teacher leadership to encompass teaching competence, research competence, leadership planning competence, organizational leadership competence, and community relationship coordination competence. Zhao (2021) categorizes the leadership attributes of young university educators into four dimensions: moral leadership, teaching leadership, research leadership, and team leadership. He has also initiated the development of a theoretical framework aimed at analyzing the leadership characteristics of young university teachers.

Methodology

This quantitative study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Data collection utilized an online-distributed five-point questionnaire comprising 141 measurement items. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table (n=615). The questionnaire items were adapted from existing scales, with language revisions and contextual refinements tailored to the Chinese special education context. The adaptation process involved forward and reverse translation conducted by three special education teachers, along with item-objective conformity (IOC) assessments by a panel of five experts to ensure high relevance to the special education profession. After excluding respondents with identical responses, data from 550 respondents were retained for further analysis. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale for scoring and underwent comprehensive validation and reliability testing to ensure the accuracy and

robustness of the measurement of special education school teacher leadership.

This qualitative study involved nine teachers from nine special education schools located in Zhejiang Province. Purposeful sampling was employed to conduct semi-structured interviews with these teachers. The content of the interviews primarily concentrated on the effective teacher leadership model within special education schools in the region. The interview data were analyzed through transcript review to validate the proposed effective teacher leadership model for special education schools in Zhejiang Province.

In this study, data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS version 26 and IBM AMOS version 30, with a specific focus on applying confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the dimensional structure of the constructs. CFA was utilized to evaluate unidimensionality, construct validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability (Shanthi, 2019; Awang et al., 2018). For the assessment of unidimensionality, factor loadings below 0.50 were deemed unacceptable (Awang et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2009). Ideally, the factor loadings for each item should be 0.70 to 0.80 or higher.

The criteria for establishing convergent validity required an average variance extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.50. In contrast, the criteria for confirming discriminant validity necessitated that the square root of the AVE for each construct be greater than the inter-construct correlation coefficient (Awang et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2009). Reliability was evaluated using composite reliability (CR), with a CR value exceeding 0.7–0.8 deemed acceptable for established items, while a CR value greater than 0.60 was considered adequate for newly developed items (Hair et al., 2009). Furthermore, all items were mandated to exhibit positive and one-way loadings. Collectively, these criteria ensured that the measurement model possessed robust psychometric properties, rendering it suitable for subsequent structural analysis.

Results

The sample was randomly selected from 90 special education schools in Zhejiang Province, resulting in a final sample size of 550 participants, predominantly female (83.30%). Among the surveyed teachers, the largest age group was 30-39 years old (29.80%), followed by those under 25 years (21.5%), 25-29 years (21.3%), and 40-49 years (18.2%). Those over 49 years old accounted for 9.3%. In terms of educational background, 50.0% of the respondents held bachelor's degrees, 41.1% held associate's degrees, and 8.9% held master's degrees, with no respondents possessing doctoral degrees. Regarding work experience, the largest group (34.4%) had less than 5 years of experience, followed by those with 5-10 years (24.7%) and over 20 years (19.6%), while the group with 16-20 years of experience constituted 14.5%. The survey sample was predominantly female, with ages concentrated in the youth and middle-aged categories, and primarily comprised of holders of associate's and bachelor's degrees. This sample aligns with the actual demographics of special education teachers officially reported by Zhejiang Province.

Based on the research objectives, the following can be summarized:

1. A literature review study found that an effective teacher leadership model for special education schools includes seven core elements: Ethical leadership (EL), Instructional leadership (IL), Collaborative leadership (CL), Classroom management (CM), Research Competence (RC), Assessment Practice (AP), and Participatory Decision-making (PDM).

2. The results of a survey conducted on the leadership development of special education teachers across 90 special education schools in Zhejiang Province indicate that the overall level of leadership development is currently relatively high.

An analysis of Ethical Leadership yielded a mean of 3.748 (SD = 0.877). Item-by-item evaluations revealed the following: Ethic of Justice (Mean = 3.861,

SD = 0.989), Ethic of Care (Mean = 3.735, SD = 0.926), and Ethic of Critique (Mean = 3.647, SD = 0.994).

In the context of Instructional Leadership, the overall mean was 4.062 (SD = 0.751), with item-specific results indicating Instructional Resource Provider (Mean = 3.950, SD = 0.878), Teacher Professional Development (Mean = 3.994, SD = 0.868), Monitor Student Progress (Mean = 4.152, SD = 0.896), Curriculum Implementer (Mean = 4.192, SD = 0.861), and Optimizing Teaching Support (Mean = 4.042, SD = 0.862).

Regarding Collaborative Leadership, the mean score was 4.017 (SD = 0.743), with detailed analysis showing Collaborative Environment (Mean = 4.381, SD = 0.873), Shared Vision (Mean = 4.257, SD = 0.876), Communication Trust (Mean = 4.342, SD = 0.846), and Rights Sharing (Mean = 4.305, SD = 0.987).

For Classroom Management, a mean of 3.932 (SD = 0.877) was found, with item analyses revealing People Management (Mean = 3.932, SD = 1.007), Instructional Management (Mean = 3.974, SD = 0.971), Behavior Management (Mean = 3.804, SD = 0.963), Praise Students (Mean = 3.989, SD = 0.982), and Reward Students (Mean = 3.983, SD = 0.976).

Research Competence mean was 3.797 (SD = 0.713), with item evaluations indicating Conceptual Competency (Mean = 3.908, SD = 0.869), Methodological Competency (Mean = 3.696, SD = 0.883), Data Analysis (Mean = 3.761, SD = 0.831), Interpretation Competency (Mean = 3.719, SD = 0.847), and Writing Technical Competency (Mean = 3.892, SD = 0.877).

In terms of Assessment Practice, the overall mean was 3.999 with a standard deviation of 0.723. A detailed item-by-item analysis revealed the following means and standard deviations: Non-Achievement based grading (mean = 4.004, SD = 0.871), Design Test (mean = 4.069, SD = 0.842), Management Assessment (mean = 4.002, SD = 0.888), Explanation Assessment (mean = 3.952,

SD = 0.897), and Evaluation Application (mean = 3.966, SD = 0.875).

Regarding Participatory Decision Making, the overall mean was 3.549 with a standard deviation of 0.794. The item-by-item analysis yielded the following results: Policy Affairs (mean = 3.736, SD = 0.989), Administrative Affairs (mean = 3.757, SD = 0.926), Teaching Affairs (mean = 3.854, SD = 0.899), and Class-level Affairs (mean = 3.864, SD = 0.848).

In summary, research conducted in Zhejiang Province indicated that the means for Ethical Leadership (EL), Instructional Leadership (IL), Collaborative Leadership (CL), Classroom Management (CM), Research Competence (RC), Assessment Practice (AP), and Participatory Decision-making (PDM) were all greater than 3.51, suggesting that management practices are at a high level.

3. Confirmatory factor analysis

The confirmatory factor analysis results for an effective teacher leadership model in special education schools in Zhejiang Province reveal that Ethical Leadership comprises three components: The Ethic of Justice (EOJ), the Ethic of Care (EOC), and the Ethic of Critique (EOCQ). The factor loadings for these components were as follows: EOJ = 0.791, EOC = 0.904, and EOCQ = 0.737. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated to be 0.662, and the Composite Reliability (CR) was 0.854. These results indicate a strong convergent validity for the Ethical Leadership construct.

The Instructional Leadership (IL) framework consists of five components: Instructional Resource Provider (IRP), Teacher Professional Development (TPD), Monitoring Student Progress (MSP), Curriculum Implementer (CI), and Optimizing Teaching Support (OTS). The factor loadings for these components are as follows: IRP at 0.766, TPD at 0.751, MSP at 0.931, CI at 0.921, and OTS at 0.740. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is 0.683, and the Composite Reliability (CR) is 0.914. These results indicate a strong internal consistency and convergent validity among the components of IL. The high factor loadings suggest that each component is significantly related to the underlying construct of instructional

leadership.

The Collaborative Leadership (CL) framework includes four components: Collaborative Environment (CE), Shared Vision (SV), Communication Trust (CT), and Rights Sharing (RS). The factor loadings for these components are as follows: CE at 0.750, SV at 0.928, CT at 0.923, and RS at 0.518. The AVE is 0.636, and the CR is 0.870. These findings demonstrate a moderate to strong internal consistency and convergent validity among the components of CL.

The Construct Model (CM) comprised five components: People Management (PM), Instructional Management (IM), Behavior Management (BM), Praise Students (PS), and Reward Students (RSD). The factor loadings for PM, IM, BM, PS, and RSD were 0.689, 0.695, 0.930, 0.970, and 0.955, respectively. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was 0.735, and the Composite Reliability (CR) was 0.931. These results indicated a strong convergent validity for the components within the CM, as each factor loading exceeded the recommended threshold, demonstrating that these components were well-represented by their respective indicators.

The Reliability Construct (RC) comprised five components: Conceptual Competency (CC), Methodological Competency (MC), Data Analysis (DA), Interpretation Competency (IC), and Writing Technical Competency (WTC). The factor loadings for CC, MC, DA, IC, and WTC were 0.539, 0.895, 0.919, 0.945, and 0.599, respectively. The AVE was 0.638, and the CR was 0.893. The results indicated that the measurement model demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability and validity. Each component within the RC contributed significantly to the overall construct, with DA and IC exhibiting particularly strong factor loadings.

The Academic Performance (AP) model consists of five components: Non-Achievement Based Grading (NABG), Design Test (DT), Management Assessment (MA), Explanation Assessment (EA), and Evaluation Application (EAC). The factor

loadings for these components are as follows: NABG (0.670), DT (0.852), MA (0.854), EA (0.849), and EAC (0.641). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is 0.607, and the Composite Reliability (CR) is 0.884. These results indicate strong convergent validity for the components of the AP, as all factor loadings exceed the recommended threshold, confirming significant relationships between each component and the underlying construct.

Similarly, the Performance Development Model (PDM) comprises four components: Policy Affairs (PA), Administrative Affairs (AA), Teaching Affairs (TA), and Class-Level Affairs (CLA). The factor loadings for these components are: PA (0.821), AA (0.831), TA (0.764), and CLA (0.862). The AVE for the PDM is 0.673, and the CR is 0.891. These findings demonstrate robust convergent validity for the components of the PDM.

Table1 Convergent validity and Discriminant validity

Factor (Latent variable)	Item (Observation variable)	Estimate	AVE	CR
EL	EOCQ	.737	0.662	0.854
	EOC	.904		
	EOJ	.791		
IL	MSP	.931	0.683	0.914
	TPD	.751		
	IRP	.766		
	CI	.921		
	OTS	.740		
CL	CT	.923	0.636	0.870
	SV	.928		
	CE	.750		
	RS	.518		
CM	BM	.930	0.735	0.931
	IM	.695		
	PM	.689		
	PS	.970		
RC	RSD	.955	0.638	0.893
	DA	.919		

	MC	.895		
	CC	.539		
	IC	.945		
	WTC	.599		
	MA	.854		
	DT	.852		
AP	NABG	.670	0.607	0.884
	EA	.849		
	EAC	.641		
	TA	.764		
PDM	AA	.831	0.673	0.891
	PA	.821		
	CLA	.862		

The confirmatory factor analysis results for all leadership constructs—Ethical Leadership (EL), Instructional Leadership (IL), Collaborative Leadership (CL), Classroom Management (CM), Research Competence (RC), Assessment Practice (AP), and Participatory Decision-making (PDM)—demonstrated strong convergent validity and internal consistency. Most factor loadings for each construct exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. A few dimensions, while below 0.70 but above 0.50 (e.g., RS=0.518, CC=0.539, WTC=0.599), indicated that they were adequately represented by their respective indicators. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) values further supported the reliability and validity of the measurement model, suggesting that these components effectively captured the underlying dimensions of leadership. The dimensions were retained in the model due to their theoretical importance and practical significance. The validation of the measurement model not only confirmed the multidimensional construct validity of each construct but also revealed a series of findings with significant theoretical and practical implications. These findings provide empirical support for

understanding the essential characteristics of educational leadership in special education contexts, the core elements of special education teachers' professional competence, and the deep-seated mechanisms of special education school organization and operation.

4. Model validation using interviews

Based on content analysis, this study conducted in-depth interviews with nine respondents. The analysis of the interview data effectively constructed and validated a leadership model for teachers in special education schools in Zhejiang Province. This model comprises seven elements: Ethical Leadership (EL), Instructional Leadership (IL), Collaborative Leadership (CL), Classroom Management (CM), Research Capability (RC), Assessment Practice (AP), and Participatory Decision Making (PDM). Subsequently, the researchers presented the model to nine experts for evaluation. The researchers summarized the relevant data and concluded that the statistical analysis results from these nine respondents confirmed that the model is both consistent with reality and aligns with the theoretical framework of this study.

The construction and evaluation results of an effective teacher leadership model in special education schools in Zhejiang Province indicate that the model comprises seven key elements: the first element is Ethical Leadership (EL), the second is Instructional Leadership (IL), the third is Collaborative Leadership (CL), the fourth is Classroom Management (CM), the fifth is Research Capability (RC), the sixth is Assessment Practice (AP), and the seventh is Participatory Decision Making (PDM).

Discussion

1. The findings of this study offer robust empirical evidence supporting the reliability and validity of an effective teacher leadership measurement model specifically designed for special education schools in Zhejiang Province. This

model encompasses seven theoretically grounded constructs: Ethical Leadership (EL), Instructional Leadership (IL), Collaborative Leadership (CL), Classroom Management (CM), Research Capability (RC), Assessment Practice (AP), and Participatory Decision Making (PDM). A confirmatory factor analysis conducted on these seven constructs revealed fit indices ranging from acceptable to excellent, thereby affirming the construct validity and reliability of the measurement instrument.

2. The effective teacher leadership model in special education schools in Zhejiang Province includes the following seven components:

Part 1, Ethical Leadership (EL), encompasses the Ethic of Justice (EOJ), Ethic of Care (EOC), and Ethic of Critique (EOCQ). This finding aligns with the research conducted by Langlois et al. (2014), which identified that the ethic of justice signifies leaders' dedication to fairness, respect, and collaboration; the ethic of care highlights the importance of acknowledging and supporting individual differences; and the ethic of critique emphasizes the necessity of reflecting on organizational regulations and structural injustices. The validation of this three-dimensional framework in the current study further reinforces the multidimensional nature of ethical leadership, illustrating that it encompasses not only normative and relational dimensions but also a critical examination of power dynamics and institutional structures.

Part 2, Instructional Leadership (IL), consists of five components: Instructional Resource Provider (IRP), Teacher Professional Development (TPD), Monitoring Student Progress (MSP), Curriculum Implementer (CI), and Optimizing Teaching Support (OTS). This structure closely aligns with the framework summarized by Akram et al. (2017), whose systematic review identified instructional resources, teacher development, time optimization, student progress monitoring, feedback, and curriculum implementation as central

components of instructional leadership. The present findings also correspond with the PILS model proposed by Lai et al. (2025), which encompasses five factors related to enhancing school teaching characteristics, improving curriculum and instructional quality, motivating teacher growth, strengthening adaptive learning outcomes, and optimizing instructional support. Overall, the validated five-factor structure reinforces the multidimensional nature of IL and demonstrates strong consistency with prior empirical and theoretical work.

Part 3, Collaborative Leadership (CL), encompasses Collaborative Environment (CE), Shared Vision (SV), Communication Trust (CT), and Rights Sharing (RS). This framework aligns well with the Collaborative Leadership Index developed by Lu (2018) for elementary school principals. The four-factor structure identified in this study effectively captures the essential relational and organizational processes highlighted in existing research. Overall, these findings further affirm that CL is fundamentally rooted in promoting shared goals, mutual trust, and distributed influence within the school community.

Part 4, Classroom Management (CM) encompasses several key dimensions: People Management (PM), Instructional Management (IM), Behavior Management (BM), Praise Students (PS), and Reward Students (RSD). The dimensions of People Management and Instructional Management utilized in this study are grounded in the framework proposed by Temli-Durmus (2016), while the Behavior Management factor aligns with the model introduced by Martin and Sass (2010). Furthermore, the dimensions pertaining to praise and rewards are informed by the framework outlined by Bolat (2023). Collectively, the validated five-factor structure in this study reinforces a multidimensional understanding of CM and demonstrates coherence with existing conceptual frameworks.

Part 5, Research Capability (RC) encompasses Conceptual Competency (CC), Methodological Competency (MC), Data Analysis (DA), Interpretation Competency (IC), and Writing Technical Competency (WTC). This structure aligns with the framework proposed by Insorio (2024). The five-factor model identified

in this study thus extends Insorio's framework by distinguishing writing-related technical skills as an independent dimension, thereby further confirming the multifaceted nature of Research Capability (RC).

Part 6, Assessment Practice (AP), encompasses Non-Achievement Based Grading (NABG), Design Test (DT), Management Assessment (MA), Explanation Assessment (EA), and Evaluation Application (EAC). This structure aligns with the theoretical foundations of assessment practice and reflects the responsibilities of special education teachers. Specifically, the inclusion of the Non-Achievement Based Grading dimension is informed by the research of Zhang & Burry-Stock (2003), while the remaining dimensions correspond to the design, administration, interpretation, and application components outlined by Matovu (2019). Therefore, the five-factor structure validated in this study integrates and extends these established frameworks, providing a comprehensive perspective on AP within the context of special education.

Part 7, Participatory Decision Making (PDM), encompasses Policy Affairs (PA), Administrative Affairs (AA), Teaching Affairs (TA), and Class-level Affairs (CLA). This structure aligns with established conceptualizations of teacher participation in school decision-making. Specifically, the inclusion of policy, administrative, and teaching affairs corresponds to the three latent variables proposed in Wang(2008) Teacher Decision-Making Participation Scale, while the incorporation of class-level affairs reflects the classroom-level management dimension outlined by Cheng(2002). By integrating these frameworks, the present study constructs a more comprehensive model that captures both the content domains and hierarchical levels of decision-making participation.

Recommendations

This study concludes that the effective teacher leadership model in

special education schools in Zhejiang Province comprises seven components: the first component is Ethical Leadership (EL), the second is Instructional Leadership (IL), the third is Collaborative Leadership (CL), the fourth is Classroom Management (CM), the fifth is Research Capability (RC), the sixth is Assessment Practice (AP), and the seventh is Participatory Decision Making (PDM).

Regarding research recommendations, the main points include the following:

1. The recommendations of this study include:

1.1 Enhance Ethical Leadership (EL) Through Care-Centered Professional Development.

1.2 Strengthening instructional leadership (IL) through a balance of oversight and support.

1.3 Transforming Collaborative Leadership (CL) Through Genuine Power Sharing.

1.4 Institutionalizing positive behavior support into core professional practice.

1.5 Bridging the research capability gap by integrating academic and practical learning.

1.6 Transforming assessment practice from measurement to teaching improvement.

1.7 Extending participatory decision-making beyond teaching autonomy.

2. Suggestions for future research:

2.1 Exploring the Power-Sharing Paradox in Collaborative Leadership in Special Education.

2.2 Exploring the theoretical and practical gaps in the research capabilities of special education teachers.

2.3 Understanding the Transformation of Assessment into Teaching.

2.4 Develop and test a comprehensive model that connects leadership, teacher competence, and student outcomes.

2.5 Fragmentation and Integration Pathways for Evaluating Special Education Teachers' Competence.

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