

The practical path of enhancing team collaboration ability through leadership of university teachers

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Abstract: The leadership of university teachers plays an important role in enhancing team collaboration abilities, but in practice, they face practical challenges such as role cognitive conflicts, lack of collaborative incentive mechanisms, and insufficient organizational support. This article constructs a closed-loop path of "cognition action system" based on three dimensions: role reshaping, task authorization, and shared evaluation. By repositioning the teacher leadership role to strengthen collaboration orientation, a task-based authorization mechanism is constructed to stimulate team interdependence behavior, and the shared evaluation and feedback system is improved to solidify collaboration capabilities. The study provides a systematic practical framework and operational guidelines for enhancing team collaboration efficiency among university teachers.

Keywords: Leadership of university teachers; Team collaboration ability; Task-based authorization; Practical path

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1. Introduction

As a key variable affecting the quality of team operation, the leadership of university teachers has gradually received academic attention in recent years. However, existing research mostly focuses on the relationship between leadership style and individual performance, and there is less systematic exploration of how it specifically transforms into an improvement path for team collaboration ability. In practice, university teachers often assume multiple roles in teaching, research, and team management, leading to fragmented leadership behavior and inadequate collaborative incentive mechanisms and organizational support. Therefore, this article focuses on the mechanism and practical challenges of the role of university teachers' leadership in team collaboration ability, and proposes practical paths from three dimensions: role reshaping, task authorization, and shared evaluation, in order to provide theoretical reference and action framework for university team building.

2. The core connotation of leadership among university teachers and the correlation mechanism between team collaboration

2.1 Structural dimensions and behavioral characteristics of leadership among university teachers

The leadership of university teachers is not a single management authority, but a composite ability composed of three dimensions: academic guidance, relationship coordination, and value shaping. In terms of behavioral characteristics, it is manifested as informal influence based on professional identity, emphasizing the stimulation of team members' intrinsic motivation through demonstration, motivation, and empowerment^[1]. Unlike administrative directives under a hierarchical system, teacher leadership emphasizes flat interaction and empathetic communication, reflecting a unique attribute of balancing education and academia. This leadership structure determines that its mode of action is usually flexible and embedded in the daily teaching and research collaboration process, laying a behavioral foundation for understanding its impact on team collaboration ability.

2.2 Key elements and generation logic of team collaboration ability

Team collaboration ability is reflected in the context of universities as the ability of members to share information, rely on tasks, and coordinate conflicts based on common goals. The key elements include clear collaboration goals, a trusting psychological environment, and flexible role adaptation mechanisms. From the perspective of generative logic, collaborative ability is not spontaneously formed, but gradually constructed through continuous task interaction and feedback regulation. Members need to go through three stages: goal alignment, division of labor, and trust accumulation in order to form a stable collaborative behavior pattern. This logic suggests

that the improvement of team collaboration ability highly relies on external guidance and internal catalysis, and teacher leadership is a key exogenous variable among them.

2.3 Theoretical Bridge of Leadership on Team Collaboration Ability

From a theoretical perspective, the role of teacher leadership in team collaboration can be explained through social exchange theory and distributed leadership theory. On the one hand, leaders establish reciprocal norms through emotional support and resource allocation, enhancing members' willingness to cooperate, which is a manifestation of social exchange mechanisms. On the other hand, distributed leadership emphasizes the dynamic flow of power and responsibility among team members, and teachers activate members' participation motivation through authorization and shared decision-making, thereby catalyzing the spontaneous emergence of collaborative behavior. The two together form a theoretical bridge, indicating that leadership is not a direct replacement for team action, but rather an indirect enhancement of collaborative abilities through shaping relationship structures and action beliefs.

3. Leadership driven team collaboration among university teachers faces challenges

3.1 Role cognitive conflict leads to fragmented leadership behavior

College teachers often switch roles between educators, researchers, and team leaders simultaneously, and the implicit behavioral expectations of different roles often lead to conflicts. For example, teaching requires individual leadership and knowledge transmission, while team leadership requires equal dialogue and process coordination. There are essential differences between the two in terms of communication style and authoritative posture. When the boundaries of roles are blurred or contradictions are prominent, teachers find it difficult to form a stable and coherent leadership behavior pattern, manifested as a fragmented state of sometimes excessive intervention and sometimes passive avoidance. This inconsistency can weaken team members' expected grasp of leadership behavior, thereby interfering with the establishment of collaborative norms.

3.2 Lack of collaborative incentive mechanism leads to weakened team cohesion

In the current evaluation system of universities, research achievements and teaching workload usually dominate, and team collaboration behavior often lacks clear institutional rewards. The structural lack of incentive mechanisms directly leads to teachers and team members focusing their energy on individual tasks that can be completed independently, while their willingness to collaborate across roles and tasks decreases. Over time, the team gradually developed a state of "formal cooperation, substantive individual work", with information sharing and interdependence becoming increasingly sparse, and team cohesion and sense of belonging significantly weakened. The improvement of collaboration ability lacks a sustained source of motivation in this context.

3.3 Insufficient organizational support constrains the transformation of leadership to collaborative effectiveness

Even if teachers have strong personal leadership skills, if necessary institutional, resource, and platform support are not provided at the departmental or school level, leadership is difficult to effectively translate into practical improvements in team collaboration. Specifically, there is a lack of dedicated funding and time guarantee for team collaboration, a lack of formal channels for interdisciplinary collaboration, and a lack of training and supervision on teacher leadership behavior. The weakness of this supportive environment often leads to teacher leadership behavior remaining at the level of individual effort, which cannot form a sustainable institutionalized collaboration mechanism. The result is a transformation gap between leadership and team effectiveness, and a lack of systematic support for improving collaboration skills.

4. Practical path for enhancing team collaboration ability through leadership of university teachers

4.1 Reshaping the Leadership Role of Teachers to Strengthen Collaboration Orientation

The enhancement of leadership among university teachers first requires reshaping their role positioning at the cognitive level, clarifying that leadership behavior is not equivalent to administrative control, but rather a collaborative oriented role centered on service and empowerment. In practice, teachers should consciously transform themselves from "task allocators" to "collaborative catalysts", actively taking on supportive functions such as information connection, resource integration, and conflict resolution in the team, rather than simply relying on official authority to issue instructions^[2]. This role reshaping requires teachers to give up comprehensive control over the process and instead focus on how to stimulate active interdependence and knowledge sharing among members. Specifically, the collaborative leadership identity can be gradually internalized through establishing regular team empathy feedback sessions, publicly acknowledging member contributions, and incorporating diverse opinions in decision-making. When team members perceive the leader's service-oriented positioning, their psychological security and behavioral initiative in participating in collaboration will significantly increase, laying a cognitive and emotional foundation for the substantial improvement of team collaboration ability.

4.2 Building a task-based authorization mechanism to stimulate team interdependence behavior

The task-based authorization mechanism is a key operational layer design for the transformation of teacher leadership to team collaboration ability. Its core lies in breaking down the overall task into several interdependent subtasks, and through authorization, assigning irreplaceable role responsibilities to different members, thereby forcing the spontaneous generation of collaborative behavior^[3]. Teachers should clarify the input-output relationship between each link during the task initiation stage, so that each member realizes that the completion of their own work depends on the previous achievements of others, and at the same time, their own achievements also provide prerequisites for subsequent tasks. On this basis, teachers can delegate task coordination and local decision-making authority to specific members, reducing top-down hierarchical requests and enhancing the team's response speed and degree of responsibility internalization. For example, in research projects or course development teams, teachers can set up "interdependent nodes" and grant node leaders adjustment permissions. This authorization not only reduces the coordination burden on teachers themselves, but more importantly, forms a positive and interdependent behavior chain within the team, making collaboration no longer an external requirement, but an internal need for task advancement.

4.3 Improve the shared evaluation and feedback system to solidify collaboration capabilities

The long-term maintenance of collaborative ability cannot rely solely on the leadership behavior of individual teachers, but also requires the embedding of institutionalized shared evaluation and feedback systems for solidification. The current evaluation system in universities generally focuses on individual achievements, resulting in a lack of sustained incentives for collaborative behavior. To this end, teachers should promote the establishment of an evaluation mechanism at the team level with collaborative processes and common outputs as core indicators, incorporating behaviors such as information sharing, task coordination, and conflict coordination into observable evaluation dimensions. At the same time, the feedback system should operate in a multi-source, two-way manner, including regular diagnosis of the overall collaboration status of the team by teachers, as well as anonymous feedback between members and members on teacher leadership behavior. The feedback results should not only stay at the summary level, but should form a closed-loop improvement process of "evaluation discussion adjustment re evaluation". By appropriately linking collaboration performance with resource allocation and performance recognition, and with transparent feedback display, team members' behavioral expectations will gradually shift towards collaboration. Institutionalized evaluation and feedback make collaboration no longer dependent on individual moral consciousness or temporary calls, but become a structural norm for team operation.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that the leadership of university teachers does not have a non-linear direct effect on the improvement of team collaboration ability, but is achieved through three progressive practical paths: role reshaping, authorization mechanism, and evaluation system. The transformation of teachers' leadership roles from "controllers" to "catalysts" provides a cognitive prerequisite for collaboration; The task-based authorization mechanism transforms collaboration from moral advocacy to task necessity, activating team interdependence behavior; The shared evaluation and feedback system provides an institutional solidification mechanism for collaborative capabilities. The three form a closed-loop path of "cognition action system", providing an operable practical framework for team building in universities.

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