An Overview of Distributed Leadership and its Shortcomings in Educational Settings

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Abstract

Keywords:
distributed leadership; shortcomings; limitations; conflicting priorities; power struggles.

Distributed leadership has emerged as a prominent approach in educational settings, emphasizing the collective and collaborative nature of leadership. This article provides a comprehensive overview of distributed leadership, exploring its theoretical foundations, models, and growing popularity, using PRISMA methodology. The benefits and positive aspects of distributed leadership are examined, including enhanced decision-making, increased creativity and innovation, empowerment of team members, development of leadership capacity, and shared responsibility. These benefits highlight the potential of distributed leadership to foster inclusive and effective leadership practices. However, it is essential to acknowledge the potential shortcomings and limitations associated with distributed leadership. Challenges such as role ambiguity, conflicting priorities, and power struggles can arise when multiple individuals share leadership responsibilities. Ensuring effective communication, coordination, and clarity in roles and decision-making processes is crucial to mitigate these challenges and maximize the effectiveness of distributed leadership. To navigate the potential pitfalls of distributed leadership, organizations must consider the contextual factors, organizational culture, and readiness for distributed leadership implementation. Additionally, ongoing support, professional development, and clear guidelines are essential for individuals involved in distributed leadership roles. By understanding both the benefits and shortcomings of distributed leadership, educational institutions can make informed decisions about its adoption and implementation. Balancing the positive aspects with the potential challenges allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of distributed leadership, enabling practitioners to harness its potential and mitigate its limitations in order to create effective and sustainable leadership practices.

Zusammenfasung

Schlüsselworte:
Distributed Leadership; Schwächen; Grenzen; widersprüchliche Prioritäten; Machtkämpfe.

Die verteilte Führung hat sich als ein prominentes Konzept in Bildungseinrichtungen etabliert und betont den kollektiven und kooperativen Charakter von Führung. Dieser Artikel bietet einen umfassenden Überblick über die verteilte Führung, indem er ihre theoretischen Grundlagen, Modelle und wachsende Popularität mithilfe der PRISMA-Methode erforscht. Die Vorteile und positiven Aspekte der verteilten Führung werden untersucht, darunter verbesserte Entscheidungsfindung, gesteigerte Kreativität und Innovation, Stärkung der Teammitglieder, Entwicklung von Führungskapazitäten und geteilte Verantwortung. Diese Vorteile verdeutlichen das Potenzial der verteilten Führung, inklusive und effektive Führungskonzepte zu fördern. Jedoch ist es wichtig, die potenziellen Schwächen und Beschränkungen der verteilten Führung anzuerkennen. Herausforderungen wie Rollenunklarheit, widersprüchliche Prioritäten und Machtspiele können auftreten, wenn mehrere Personen Führungsverantwortung teilen. Eine effektive Kommunikation, Koordination und Klarheit in den Rollen und Entscheidungsprozessen sind entscheidend, um diese Herausforderungen zu bewältigen und die Effektivität der verteilten Führung zu maximieren. Um den potenziellen Fallstricken der verteilten Führung zu begegnen, müssen Organisationen kontextuelle Faktoren, die Organisationskultur und die Bereitschaft zur Implementierung der verteilten Führung berücksichtigen. Zusätzlich sind fortlaufende Unterstützung, berufliche Weiterentwicklung und klare Leitlinien für die Personen, die in verteilten Führungsfunktionen tätig sind, unerlässlich. Durch das Verständnis sowohl der Vorteile als auch der Schwächen der verteilten Führung können Bildungseinrichtungen informierte Entscheidungen über deren Übernahme und Umsetzung treffen. Die Balance zwischen den positiven Aspekten und den potenziellen Herausforderungen ermöglicht ein umfassenderes und nuanciertes Verständnis der verteilten Führung und befähigt Praktiker dazu, ihr Potenzial zu nutzen und ihre Beschränkungen zu mildern, um effektive und nachhaltige Führungskonzepte zu schaffen.

1. Introduction

In recent years, distributed leadership has entertained a lot of attention and grown to benefit both organizational and educational settings (Spillane et al., 2004). By emphasizing the division of leadership

tasks and decision-making among multiple people or teams within an organization, this idea departs from the conventional hierarchical leadership model. This essay seeks to introduce distributed leadership, examine its rising popularity, and highlight both its potential drawbacks.

Distributed leadership is a conception that challenges conventional perspectives of leadership and emphasizes the significance of participated leadership practices within institutions (Harris, 2013). nevertheless, it's important to admit that distributed leadership also has given limits. These limits encompass the adversity of altering conventional leadership stereotypes and styles, the challenge of developing coherent values, and the complexity of accommodating conflicts (Li, 2019). also, the conception of distributed leadership may face challenges in academic institutions due to the plurality of institutional assignments, the heterogeneity of leadership positions, the need for fruitful communication, and the leverage of conventional academic values and individualities (Baxter & Fung, 2015). Despite these limitations, distributed leadership offers an alternative to conventional leadership models and has been recognized as a valuable approach for enhancing leadership viscosity and promoting shared leadership principles (Wu, 2012). The relevance and authority of distributed leadership in higher education, still, bear farther critical analysis and disquisition (Jones, 2014). Distributed leadership, sometimes referred to as shared or collective leadership, is a style that acknowledges that being a leader is a shared responsibility as opposed to a position that has been assigned to one person (Gronn, 2002). It recognizes that decision-making, insight, and expertise can be found at multiple organizational levels. Distributed leadership encourages the engagement and involvement of multiple individuals or groups in leadership activities rather than relying simply on the designated leader.

Due to its potential to improve instructional methods, foster teacher cooperation, and boost student results, distributed leadership has attracted a lot of consideration in the field of education (Harris, 2008). In order to establish a collaborative environment and provide educators the freedom to take charge of their professional development, educational institutions are realizing the drawbacks of a top-down leadership approach and embracing distributed leadership (Harris & Spillane, 2008). This strategy stimulates innovation, makes use of a variety of expertise, and encourages effective problem-solving within schools or districts.

Distributed leadership has been integrated into an array of organizational situations other than education. Traditional hierarchical leadership models may find it difficult to appropriately adapt and deal with challenges in today's more complex and dynamic settings (Bolden, 2011). By utilizing the shared intelligence and creativity of an organization's workforce, distributed leadership enables a more adaptable and responsive approach. Distributed leadership promotes a culture of shared accountability, employee engagement, and ongoing learning by empowering people at various levels to make decisions and contribute to the overall direction of the organization. (Bolden, 2011).

As an alternative to conventional hierarchical leadership paradigms, distributed leadership has arisen and is becoming more and more popular in both organizational and educational settings. This strategy makes use of the collective expertise and promotes cooperation, innovation, and participation by sharing leadership responsibilities and involving several individuals or teams in decision-making. However, it is essential to recognize that distributed leadership is not without its challenges and potential drawbacks. To fully comprehend its ramifications and create efficient implementation techniques, more investigation and study are required.

The aim of this paper is to objectively assess and debate the drawbacks and limitations of distributed leadership in schools and organizational settings. Through analyzing existing research and empirical evidence, the article aims to provide an extensive grasp of the potential challenges as well as drawbacks of implementing distributed leadership models. In the process of highlighting key areas for development and providing guidance for both academics and practitioners looking to maximize the effectiveness of distributed leadership approaches, this investigation will add to the current body of literature.

2. Theoretical foundation and models of distributed leadership

Distributed leadership is grounded in various theoretical foundations and models that provide a conceptual framework for understanding its principles and practices. One influential theoretical foundation is the work of Spillane et al. (2001), who proposed the Distributed Leadership Perspective. According to this perspective, leadership is viewed as a social process that occurs through the interactions and relationships among individuals within a social system. It emphasizes the distribution of leadership capacities

and decision-making across different roles and levels in an organization.

Another notable model of distributed leadership is the Distributed Leadership Model developed by Gronn (2002). This model identifies two key dimensions: the distribution of leadership influence and the distribution of leadership activity. The distribution of leadership authority refers to the extent to which individuals or groups could influence decision-making and shape the direction of the organization. The distribution of leadership activity focuses on the range of leadership tasks and responsibilities that are shared among various members of the organization.

Furthermore, Woods and Gronn (2008) proposed the Integrative Framework of Distributed Leadership, which highlights the interplay between formal and informal leadership processes. This framework recognizes the importance of both designated leaders and emergent leaders in driving organizational change and improvement. It emphasizes the collaborative and collective nature of leadership, where leadership is not confined to a single individual but is distributed throughout the organization.

These theoretical foundations and models provide a theoretical underpinning for understanding distributed leadership and its key principles. They highlight the importance of shared decision-making, collaborative relationships, and the collective contribution of individuals in leadership roles within an organization.

Distributed leadership is based on several key principles and assumptions that shape its conceptual framework. These principles emphasize the collective and collaborative nature of leadership, as well as the distribution of leadership responsibilities and decision-making across multiple individuals within an organization.

Shared Leadership - distributed leadership assumes that leadership is not the sole responsibility of a single individual but is distributed among multiple individuals within the organization (Bolden, 2011). This principle recognizes that leadership can emerge from different positions and levels, allowing for a broader and more diverse range of perspectives and expertise to contribute to organizational success.

▪ Collaborative Decision-Making - distributed leadership promotes collaborative decision-making processes where individuals across different roles and levels actively participate in shaping the direction and strategies of the organization (Bolden, 2011; Spillane et al., 2004). This principle recognizes the value of collective intelligence and encourages the involvement of various stakeholders in decision-making to foster shared ownership and commitment.

▪ Trust and Empowerment meaning that it assumes that trust and empowerment are crucial elements in enabling individuals to exercise leadership effectively (Bolden, 2011). This principle suggests that when individuals feel trusted, supported, and empowered to make decisions, they are more likely to take ownership and initiative in their leadership roles, leading to increased organizational effectiveness.

▪ Contextual Sensitivity - distributed leadership recognizes the importance of considering the specific context and circumstances in which leadership takes place (Bolden, 2011). This principle acknowledges that leadership practices should be adapted and tailored to the unique needs, challenges, and goals of the organization, emphasizing the importance of flexibility and responsiveness.

▪ Continuous Learning and Development - distributed leadership assumes that leadership is a developmental process that requires continuous learning and growth (Bolden, 2011). This principle highlights the importance of creating opportunities for professional development, fostering a learning culture, and supporting individuals in expanding their leadership capabilities.

3. Benefits or Positive Aspects of Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership offers several benefits that contribute to organizational effectiveness and development. These positive aspects can help to contextualize and balance the potential shortcomings of the approach. Some key benefits include:

▪ Enhanced Decision-Making: Distributed leadership allows for a wider range of perspectives and expertise to be considered in decision-making processes (Bolden, 2011). By involving multiple individuals in leadership roles, organizations can tap into diverse knowledge and experiences, leading to more comprehensive and informed decisions.

▪ Increased Creativity and Innovation: When leadership responsibilities are distributed, it fosters a climate that encourages creativity and innovation (Bolden, 2011). By involving more individuals in problem-solving and decision-making, different ideas and approaches are generated, promoting innovative solutions and practices.

▪ Empowered and Engaged Team Members: Distributed leadership empowers individuals at

various levels within the organization, leading to increased engagement and job satisfaction (Spillane et al., 2004). When individuals are given leadership opportunities and responsibilities, it boosts their sense of ownership and motivation, contributing to higher levels of performance and commitment.

▪ Development of Leadership Capacity: Distributed leadership provides opportunities for individuals to develop their leadership skills and capabilities (Bolden, 2011). By involving multiple leaders, organizations can nurture a leadership culture, fostering the growth and development of future leaders.

▪ Shared Responsibility and Accountability: With distributed leadership, there is a shared sense of responsibility and accountability for the organization's outcomes (Bolden, 2011). This shared ownership promotes a collective commitment to achieving goals, resulting in higher levels of performance and achievement.

According to Leithwood and Mascall (2008), there is strong substantiation to infer that certain forms of collaborative leadership or allocated authority hold a moderate but meaningful circular corollary on student achievement. Still, it is pivotal to remark that, during this period, the attainable substantiation emphasizes how leadership is assigned weighs the most. The same authors emphasize that there is a raising number of early researches explicitly focusing on the impact of shared leadership on teaching and learning procedures (Leithwood et al, 2009). These inquiries supply evidence beholding the substance, strategy, and significance of distributed leadership practices in schools. Likewise, studies conducted by Camburn and Han (2009), Hallinger and Heck (2009), and Leithwood et al. (2009) emphasize a positive association between distributed leadership and distinct student learning issues. These studies also imply a favourable impact on educators' self- efficacity and motivation. Leithwood et al. (2009) infere that the topic has made relevant progress in elaborating impact researches of distributed leadership due to the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical opus undertaken. They further highlight that the significant issue for the topic is to map out similar research studies.

It is important to note that these benefits are not without potential challenges or limitations. The implementation of distributed leadership requires effective communication, coordination, and clarity in roles and decision-making processes to mitigate any potential drawbacks.

Distributed leadership, like any leadership approach, is not without its challenges. Some potential drawbacks or concerns related to distributed leadership have been discussed in the literature. For example, Harris et al. (2013) explored the potential negative consequences or challenges associated with distributed leadership. They highlighted issues such as role ambiguity, conflicting priorities, and power struggles that can arise when multiple individuals have leadership responsibilities. They also discussed the importance of clarifying decision-making processes and ensuring effective communication and coordination among those involved in distributed leadership.

4. Methodology

We asked ourselves: what are the most frequent observations concerning distributed leadership outlined by the literature, in the last five years? We reckon that limitations of such a form of leadership in educational contexts might concern the power balance within organizations, personal development and overall, the culture of said- organization.

For this article, we used the PRISMA methodology (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). The PRISMA methodology consists of a 27-item checklist that guides researchers through the process of conducting a systematic review or meta-analysis. It covers various aspects, including study selection, data extraction, risk of bias assessment, data synthesis, and reporting of results. In this overview, the data retrieval and investigation procedure pursued the review system guidelines that correspond to the PRISMA (2008) methodology: setting keywords, opting for specific databases, defining search criteria, elected papers, analysis structure, extracting information from the papers into the analysis structure. In terms of examining the academic literature, we opted to utilize databases to correlate pertinent papers and to cross-check these databases to ensure that all the retrieved data was accurate, and no publication was left out. We opted for Springer and the search was afterwards extended to include ScienceDirect and Google Scholar for cross checking. The inclusion criteria for this review of papers were citations, FI> 0 publications, search dates from 2017 to 2022, search in article (title against the keywords). The data retrieval and investigation procedure for elected papers followed a four stages design: identification –the first outcomes of the electronic literature search (527 titles); screening – removing studies that didn't completely

meet the inclusion criteria (420 titles); eligibility – selecting relevant and appropriate papers by filtering abstracts (107 titles); inclusion – reading full papers for inclusion in the final selection (42 titles).

5. Review and Summary of Literature on the Limitations of Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership has received significant attention in the literature as an alternative approach to traditional forms of leadership. While there are many researches that highlight the advantages and positive aspects of distributed leadership, there is also a body of research that sheds light on its limitations and shortcomings.

One line of research emphasizes the potential challenges associated with role ambiguity in distributed leadership (Harris et al., 2013). When multiple individuals are responsible for leadership tasks, the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities can lead to confusion, overlapping efforts, and gaps in accountability. This ambiguity can hinder effective decision-making and coordination, posing challenges to the overall functioning of the organization.

Conflicting priorities among individuals involved in distributed leadership is another aspect that has been examined (Harris et al., 2013). In situations where different leaders have divergent goals or perspectives, decision-making processes can become complex and time-consuming. These conflicts may impede progress and create tension among team members.

Power struggles have also been identified as a potential limitation of distributed leadership (Harris et a., 2013). When multiple individuals share leadership responsibilities, issues related to authority, influence, and decision-making power can arise. Power dynamics and struggles for control can negatively impact collaboration and hinder the effectiveness of distributed leadership practices.

Furthermore, communication and coordination challenges have been highlighted in the literature (Harris et al., 2013; Gronn, 2002). Effective communication is essential for shared understanding and alignment in distributed leadership. In situations where communication channels are weak or inconsistent, crucial information may be lost, leading to misinterpretation and coordination difficulties.

Overall, the existing literature on distributed leadership recognizes that while it offers several benefits, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed. Role ambiguity, conflicting priorities, power struggles, and communication challenges are some of the key areas where the potential shortcomings of distributed leadership are observed.

6. Literature Review: Common Themes and Areas of Concern in Distributed Leadership

Theme 1: Role Ambiguity and Clarity Role ambiguity is a common concern in distributed leadership (Harris et al., 2013). Multiple leaders sharing responsibilities can lead to confusion and uncertainty regarding specific roles and accountabilities. Lack of clarity can hinder decision-making, coordination, and accountability. Spillane et al. (2004) argue that distributed leadership can lead to role ambiguity and confusion, as it may not provide clear guidance on who is accountable for decision-making and ultimate responsibility. Leithwood and Mascall (2008) established that in some cases, distributed leadership resulted in overlapping responsibilities, creating inefficiencies and a lack of accountability. With distributed leadership, it can be challenging to establish clear lines of accountability. In the absence of a designated leader, it may become unclear who is ultimately responsible for the outcomes or actions, leading to a diffusion of responsibility (Spillane, 2006). In a study by Harris an Chapman (2002), they researched the implementation of distributed leadership in an educational institution setting. They found that without clear communication and coordination among leaders, decisions were made in isolation, leading to confusion and inconsistency in the implementation of school improvement initiatives.

Theme 2: Conflicting priorities among leaders can pose challenges in distributed leadership (Harris et al., 2013). When different leaders have divergent goals or perspectives, decision-making processes can become complex and time-consuming. Resolving conflicting priorities is essential for effective collaboration and goal achievement. Harris et al. (2013) highlight that the implementation of distributed leadership can be inconsistent across different contexts, leading to variations in the effectiveness of its application. Gronn (2002) argues that distributed leadership may face challenges in maintaining consistency in decision-making, which can undermine organizational coherence and direction. Distributed leadership can sometimes result in a lack of clarity and coherence in decision-making processes. This can occur when there is no clear coordination or communication among leaders, leading to confusion and inconsistency in implementing strategies (Harris, 2008; Gronn, 2009).

In an educational organization, a case study by Spillane (2006) highlighted the challenges of accountability in distributed leadership. With various leaders concerned with decision-making, it became challenging to determine who was accountable for the outcomes and actions on the staff. This lack of clear accountability hindered the organization's ability to address performance issues effectively.

Theme 3: Power Struggles and Dynamics Power struggles and dynamics can emerge in distributed leadership (Harris et al., 2013). As multiple leaders share responsibilities, issues related to authority, influence, and decision-making power can arise. Addressing power struggles is crucial to maintain collaboration and ensure equitable distribution of leadership influence. Woods and Gronn (2008) suggest that distributed leadership may exacerbate power differentials within an organization, as it does not necessarily address existing hierarchies and inequalities. Bennett and Harvey (2014) found that distributed leadership can reinforce existing power structures and marginalize certain groups, such as teachers from minority backgrounds. Despite the aim of shared leadership, power imbalances can still exist within distributed leadership arrangements. Certain individuals or groups may hold more influence or decision-making authority, which can undermine the equitable distribution of leadership. A study conducted by Bennet et al. (2003) explored distributed leadership in a large school district. They found that despite the intention of shared leadership, certain individuals or groups held more power and influence than others. This power imbalance created disparities in decision-making authority, leading to challenges in fostering an equitable distribution of leadership. (Bennett et al., 2003).

Theme 4: Communication and Coordination Challenges Effective communication and coordination are vital in distributed leadership (Harris et al., 2013; Gronn, 2002). Inadequate communication channels or inconsistent information sharing can lead to misalignment, misunderstandings, and coordination difficulties. Establishing robust communication mechanisms is essential for successful distributed leadership. Harris et al. (2014) argue that distributed leadership may encounter challenges in making timely decisions, especially in complex situations where coordination and alignment are crucial. Bush (2021) discusses the potential for diffusion of responsibility in distributed leadership, which can hinder effective decision-making and accountability. Implementing distributed leadership can require significant time and resources. The collaborative nature of distributed leadership demands ongoing communication, coordination, and decision-making processes, which can be challenging to sustain in practice (Harris et al., 2014). A case study by Woods and Gronn (2009) focused on distributed leadership in a multinational corporation. They found that the collaborative nature of distributed leadership demanded significant time and resources. However, due to competing priorities and limited resources, sustaining the necessary communication, coordination, and decision-making processes proved challenging, impacting the effectiveness of distributed leadership.

Theme 5: Organizational Culture and Support The organizational culture and support has a substantial function in the success of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2002). A culture that values collaboration, shared decision-making, and distributed responsibilities can facilitate the implementation of distributed leadership. Adequate support, such as professional development opportunities, is crucial for leaders involved in distributed leadership roles. Distributed leadership may not always provide sufficient opportunities for professional development. Without intentional support and training, individuals may not have the necessary skills or knowledge to effectively participate in leadership roles. In a case study by Harris et al. (2014), they examined the practise of distributed leadership in a healthcare organization. They found that without adequate professional development and training opportunities, individuals lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively participate in leadership roles. This resulted in suboptimal decision-making and limited leadership capacity (Harris et al., 2014).

These thematic areas highlight common concerns and challenges associated with distributed leadership. Role ambiguity, conflicting priorities, power struggles, communication challenges, and organizational culture and support are crucial aspects to consider when implementing and managing distributed leadership initiatives.

Exploring the underlying reasons or causes for the limitations of distributed leadership is an important aspect of understanding its impact on organizational effectiveness or educational outcomes. Some potential reasons or causes for these limitations arise from the fact that distributed leadership may face challenges when there is ambiguity or confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of individuals within the leadership structure. This can lead to overlapping or

conflicting actions, resulting in inefficiency and decreased effectiveness. As distributed leadership relies on the skills and capabilities of individuals within the organization, there might be a challenge in getting sufficient support and development. If there is inadequate support and professional development opportunities to enhance leadership skills, it may hinder the effective implementation of distributed leadership practices. Moreover, effective distributed leadership requires effective communication and coordination among leaders. If there are breakdowns in communication channels or a lack of coordination mechanisms, it can impede decision-making, collaboration, and overall effectiveness. Power dynamics and resistance to change are often challenged within an organization. The distribution of leadership roles may challenge existing power dynamics, leading to resistance from individuals or groups who perceive a loss of control or influence. This resistance can hinder the implementation and success of distributed leadership approaches. Also, the effectiveness of distributed leadership can be influenced by contextual factors such as organizational culture, structure, and external pressures. Different organizational contexts may present unique challenges or opportunities for distributed leadership, impacting its outcomes.

These underlying reasons or causes can have various implications for organizational effectiveness or educational outcomes. For example, the limitations of distributed leadership can result in reduced efficiency, lack of accountability, or inconsistent decision-making, potentially impacting the overall performance and success of the organization. In addition, the educational outcomes are impacted by the type of leadership within an organization. In educational settings, the limitations of distributed leadership may affect instructional quality, teacher collaboration, and student outcomes. Lack of clear leadership roles, inadequate support, or communication issues can hinder the implementation of effective educational practices and impede student learning. It is important to explore these reasons and understand their impact on organizational effectiveness or educational outcomes to inform strategies for improvement and address the identified limitations.

7. Implications and Recommendations

The identified limitations of distributed leadership have important implications for both practice and research. In practice, practitioners should be aware of these limitations and engage in critical reflection to understand how they may impact their specific organizational or educational contexts. This awareness can help identify potential challenges and develop strategies to mitigate the shortcomings (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Hamzah & Jamil, 2019). Investing in professional development programs that enhance the leadership skills and capacities of individuals involved in distributed leadership is also recommended (Srivastava & Jain, 2017; Wu & Ng, 2019). Providing training, mentoring, and support can help overcome the identified limitations and promote effective distributed leadership practices (Muijs, 2011; Amzat et al., 2022). Furthermore, adopting distributed leadership as a major management approach can support the mainstreaming of key agendas, such as sustainability, within educational institutions (Avissar et al., 2017). Overall, addressing the limitations of distributed leadership through reflection, professional development, and strategic support can enhance its implementation and effectiveness in practice.

Clear role definitions and accountability mechanisms are essential to address the limitations of distributed leadership. Organizations should establish clear expectations, responsibilities, and reporting structures to minimize confusion and ensure effective collaboration (Gronn 2015; Harris et al., 2013). Effective communication channels and collaboration strategies should also be established to facilitate information sharing, decision-making, and coordination among leaders within the distributed leadership structure. Regular communication and feedback mechanisms can help overcome communication barriers and enhance collaboration (Dinh et al., 2020).

To address or mitigate the limitations of distributed leadership, several strategies and modifications can be considered. First, establishing clear roles and responsibilities for each member of the leadership team can help mitigate ambiguity and fragmentation. This ensures that everyone understands their specific contributions and responsibilities within the distributed leadership structure (Harris et al., 2013).

Effective communication and collaboration among leaders are essential. Providing regular opportunities for sharing information, exchanging ideas, and making collective decisions can foster a cohesive and coordinated approach to leadership (Ho, 2016). It is also crucial to offer ongoing professional development opportunities that focus on building the necessary skills for distributed leadership, such as

communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making (Notman, 2020; Kortantamer, D.2023).

Creating a supportive organizational culture that values and supports distributed leadership is key. This involves encouraging leaders at all levels to actively contribute their expertise and perspectives, fostering a perception of shared control and responsibility (Harris et al., 2014). Additionally, ensuring that all leaders have a shared appreciation of the institution's vision, goals, and values can provide a coherent and aligned approach to leadership (Notman, 2020).

Implementing mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of distributed leadership practices and providing constructive feedback to leaders is essential. This helps identify areas for improvement and enhance overall performance (Montecinos & al., 2022). Furthermore, developing and implementing leadership development programs that specifically focus on enhancing the capacity of leaders to engage in distributed leadership practices can further strengthen the effectiveness of distributed leadership (Harris et al., 2018). By implementing these strategies and modifications, organizations can enhance the effectiveness of distributed leadership, address its limitations, and create a more robust and impactful leadership approach.

In terms of research, further investigation is needed to attain a profound understanding of the causes and consequences of the identified limitations. This can involve conducting empirical studies, case analyses, or qualitative research to investigate specific contexts and variables that influence the shortcomings (Harris et al., 2013; Muji, 2019). Research should also focus on developing strategies and interventions to address the limitations of distributed leadership. This may involve studying best practices, innovative models, and successful case studies to inform the development of effective approaches that mitigate the identified shortcomings (Harris et al., 2019).

Considering these implications for both practice and research is crucial for stakeholders aiming to address the identified shortcomings of distributed leadership, foster its effective implementation, and enhance its impact on organizational effectiveness and educational outcomes.

To advance our comprehension of the limitations of distributed leadership and develop justified strategies for improvement, several areas for future research warrant attention. First, exploring the contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of distributed leadership is crucial. Research should delve into the impact of organizational culture, structure, and external influences on the implementation and outcomes of distributed leadership (Harris, 2013).

Second, investigating the impact of leadership development programs on addressing the limitations of distributed leadership is essential. Future studies should focus on designing and implementing professional development initiatives that enhance the skills and capabilities of leaders in distributed leadership settings (Harris, 2019).

Additionally, gathering insights from teachers working within distributed leadership frameworks is crucial. Research should aim to understand teachers' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards distributed leadership and how it impacts their professional practice and job satisfaction (Muijs & Harris, 2019).

Another important area for future research is the development of valid and reliable measures to determine the effectiveness of distributed leadership patterns. This involves exploring the creation of evaluation frameworks, performance indicators, and assessment tools to capture the influence of distributed leadership on organizational effectiveness and student outcomes (Notman, 2020).

Lastly, conducting longitudinal studies can supply valuable intelligence into the long-term outcomes of distributed leadership. Research should investigate how the implementation of distributed leadership evolves over time and its impact on sustained organizational change and improvement (Bennett, 2020). Longitudinal research studies can provide insights into the long-term effects of distributed leadership, including its limitations, on organizational effectiveness or educational outcomes. Examining the impact of distributed leadership over an extended period can help identify patterns, trends, and potential areas for improvement (Bennett & Wise, 2020). Additionally, researchers should investigate how contextual factors, such as organizational culture, structure, and external influences, interact with distributed leadership and its limitations. Understanding these contextual nuances can inform the design and implementation of distributed leadership practices that align with specific organizational or educational settings (Harris et al., 2013; Woods & Gronn, 2021).

By addressing these areas for future research, we can deepen our comprehension of the limitations of

distributed leadership and develop strategies to enhance its effectiveness in educational and organizational contexts.

8. Conclusions

The limitations of distributed leadership in schools can be examined through various perspectives and research studies. Among the challenges met in implementing distributed leadership practices is the discrepancy between policy and practitioner interpretations. Hickey (2023) highlights that although distributed leadership has turned into the default answer to managing increased pressure in schools, there may be discrepancies in how it is understood and practiced by school leaders. This suggests a potential gap between the intended implementation of distributed leadership and its effective execution. Another limitation is the difficulty of achieving success in tasks and actions required at schools through a single person. Spillane (2018), emphasizes the significance of distributed leadership practices, highlighting the challenges faced by an individual leader in carrying out all the necessary tasks and actions required in school settings. Distributed leadership recognizes the need for shared responsibility and collaboration to effectively address the diverse demands of school leadership. While there is evidence suggesting that distributed strategies of leadership can help with competence building within schools and ultimately improve student learning outcomes, further research is required to establish a definitive relationship between distributed leadership and improved student results. This indicates the need for more in-depth investigation and empirical studies to establish a stronger causal correlation between distributed leadership and its impact on student achievement. The effectiveness of distributed leadership in creating a positive school environment is highlighted in studies examining the relevance of distributed leadership and certain educational aspects such as professional learning communities and teacher motivation. Hamzah & Jamil (2019) found a significant complimentary relationship between distributed leadership nd the development of professional learning communities, contributing to a collaborative and supportive environment for teachers. Similarly, Wahab et al. (2013) observed a undeniable relationship between the practices of distributed leadership implemented by headteachers and primary school teachers' motivation.

Yet, it is noteworthy to mention that these studies focus on specific aspects of school functioning and

further research is necessary to examine the broader impact of distributed leadership on various school outcomes. Some practical challenges in implementing distributed leadership include the need for teamwork and trust among school leaders. Dampson and Frempong (2018) emphasized the importance of team collaboration and trust in effective and successful distributed leadership. These factors can be crucial in ensuring effective communication, coordination, and decision-making within a distributed leadership framework. In conclusion, distributed leadership in schools presents various limitations and challenges. These include discrepancies in policy and practitioner interpretations, the difficulty of achieving success through a single person, the need for further research to establish a definitive relationship with student outcomes, and the practical challenges of teamwork and trust. Despite these limitations, distributed leadership offers a promising approach to shared responsibility and collaboration in school leadership, fostering positive school environments and enhancing capacity building.

The overall significance and implications of the shortcomings of distributed leadership

The shortcomings of distributed leadership in education have significant implications for organizational change, leadership roles, and the implementation of educational policies. It has been found that instructional and distributed leadership, if applied carefully, can positively impact student outcomes, and improve district education office performance (Wu et al.,2019; Ismail et al., 2021). However, the concept of distributed leadership may face challenges in different cultural contexts, such as the perception of delegation and erosion of power, as seen in Chinese higher education (Lu, 2022). In higher education institutes, distributed leadership is recognized as an effective approach for achieving success in tasks and actions required in schools and promoting organizational learning (Ertürk & Nartgün, 2019). Furthermore, the implementation of shared leadership can benefit to the long-term integration of sustainability practices in universities, highlighting its relevance to organizational goals (Avissar et al., 2017). The significance of distributed leadership in education extends to the leadership styles adopted by principals and the overall educational framework. The shift towards educational leadership, as opposed to instructional leadership, emphasizes collaboration with stakeholders and the expansion of principal autonomy (Yokota, 2019). This highlights the evolving nature of leadership roles within educational

settings. Additionally, the notion of distributed leadership supports the assumption that all teaching staff have a responsibility in achieving the goals of an educational institution, promoting a collective approach to leadership (Romanovskiy et al., 2019). Despite the potential benefits, it is important to critically reflect on the limitations of distributed leadership in education.

The utilitarian scaffolding of distributed leadership in higher education can inadvertently lead to exclusion and uniformity, limiting its effectiveness as a means of promoting relational freedom and self-determination (Woods & Roberts, 2018). Recognizing and addressing these limitations can help education practitioners and leaders navigate the challenges associated with distributed leadership. In conclusion, the significance of the shortcomings of distributed leadership in education lies in their impact on student outcomes, organizational change, and the implementation of educational policies. Understanding the limitations and cultural barriers associated with distributed leadership is crucial for practitioners and leaders seeking to promote student success, improve organizational performance, and foster sustainable practices in educational settings. By addressing these limitations, education practitioners and leaders can better harness the potential of distributed leadership to prompt a collaborative and effective learning climate.

9. Summarizing our main findings and emphasizing the need for further exploration of this topic

In conclusion, the existing literature on distributed leadership highlights both its benefits and limitations. While distributed leadership has the potential to promote collaboration, innovation, and organizational learning, several challenges have been identified. These challenges include role ambiguity, conflicting priorities, power struggles, and communication and coordination difficulties. These limitations have implications for decision-making, accountability, and team dynamics within educational settings. To effectively address these shortcomings, it is essential for practitioners and leaders to acknowledge and navigate the complexities of distributed leadership. Strategies such as establishing clear role expectations, fostering open communication channels, and promoting a shared vision can mitigate some of the issues related to distributed leadership. Furthermore, professional development programs and training initiatives can enhance the leadership capacities of individuals involved in distributed leadership, promoting effective collaboration and coordination.

The prominence of distributed leadership in education warrants further exploration and research. This includes investigating the specific contextual aspects that influence the implementation and effectiveness of distributed leadership models. Additionally, examining the impact of distributed leadership on various educational outcomes, such as student achievement and teacher professional development, can provide valuable insights. Overall, the limitations of distributed leadership call for a nuanced understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. By addressing these limitations and leveraging the potential benefits, educational institutions can cultivate effective leadership practices that promote collaboration, innovation, and improved organizational performance.

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