

Leadership for team learning

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VALORIZATION ADDENDUM

SOCIAL RELEVANCE

The findings of the studies presented in this dissertation can facilitate higher educational institutions in providing meaningful support for teacher teams. In 2016, the national council for education advised the Dutch government to stimulate and facilitate more teacher teamwork and the quality of that teamwork (Onderwijsraad, 2016). Their report reasoned that a team approach is needed to provide teachers with ownership of their work, which facilitates solving complex problems, such as those involved in bringing about educational change. At the same time, they concluded that the current support given to enable and improve teamwork is inadequate. It appears that leadership in educational institutes is mainly focused on supporting individual teachers and not teacher teams. Furthermore, the sources of leadership seem restricted to vertical leadership rather than a combination of vertical and shared leadership sources (Onderwijsraad, 2016). Even more recently, Van Middelkoop, Portielje, and Horssenbergh (2018) discussed the trend in higher educational institutions to establish teacher teams as a new formal working structure without considering the organizational consequences and adequate support of those teams. Subsequently, they concluded that teachers still operate as individuals despite new formal team structures. These examples illustrate that it is not enough to bring teachers together in teams and wait for educational change to happen. Teacher teams need to be adequately supported to be effective. The purpose of the research in this dissertation addresses this matter, which offers many valorization opportunities.

The aim of the studies in this dissertation was to understand how team leadership behavior can support the learning behavior of university teacher teams working towards educational change. The results of our studies can facilitate higher educational institutions in providing meaningful support for teacher teams. As such, in addition to the scientific relevance, our empirical results are meaningful for society and educational practice. This valorization addendum discusses the transfer of our findings into past valorization activities that took place as part of this PhD project, present valorization activities, and future valorization opportunities.

PAST VALORIZATION ACTIVITIES

The topic of this PhD project emerged from practice as described in the introduction:

(...) The two educational leaders wondered what they could do to help their teams engage in change and build a new educational program together.

During the PhD project, this question appeared to be relevant to teachers, teams, educational advisors, policy makers, boards, managers, and team leaders. Various presentations, workshops, round tables, and advising activities were held that were informed by the studies in this dissertation. These activities were based on questions from practice and the target groups. An example of these activities is advice given to boards of professional schools implementing a team approach to work. This involved guidance given to a management team of a professional bachelor's program in several sessions during the preparation and implementation phase. We discussed ways to structure leadership styles and sources in the teams, team purposes, team composition, team processes, and teacher reactions during the transition phase. The conceptual models, findings, and knowledge that arose from this PhD project served as a language tool to describe, understand, deepen, and reflect upon practices and develop new questions. Furthermore, the counselling activities contributed to new policy statements and advisory reports.

In symposia on teacher collaboration we discussed the theory and preliminary findings of our studies with teachers, team leaders, scholars, and policy makers in workshops and round table sessions. Furthermore, tailored workshops were given to teams on how to improve their team work. These focused on hindering and fostering conditions for teamwork and the role of shared team leadership. Similar workshops were provided for team leaders and directors on how to provide meaningful support for their teacher teams. Another activity was the development and implementation of a training program for policy makers and educational advisors on effective teamwork and leadership in a higher educational institute, which contributed to a new work approach. In addition, the findings (mostly on team leader cognition) and methods (analyzing interviews) of the studies in this dissertation were shared in several workshops for postgraduate education.

Moreover, studies 1, 3, and 4 can be considered valorization activities in themselves. In Study 1, interviews were conducted with 16 teacher team members. At the end of each interview, the participants reflected on the added value of simply taking time to talk about their team. They mentioned that it made them more aware of the processes, their tasks, and the leadership in their teams. Most of the team members said they aimed to share and discuss their growing awareness with their teams. Each participant received a summary of their interview to facilitate that transfer. In Study 3, we collected survey data from 61 teams. After data analyses,

each team received an overview of their results with an explanation and practical interpretation, for which we developed a practical format. Many teams found this information very useful and it inspired their team reflexivity. In Study 4, we interviewed 15 team leaders. After the interviews, most team leaders indicated that thinking about and describing a metaphor made them more aware of their own view on team leadership. They were very willing to reflect on the observations their team made on their team leadership. Many team leaders mentioned that this made them more aware of their own role and impact on the team. They received a summary of the interview and appreciated this structured overview of their own perceptions. Given the participants' reactions, we assume the interviews, surveys, and tailored summaries contribute to the valorization of our research.

PRESENT VALORIZATION ACTIVITIES

Currently, the findings of the studies in this dissertation serve as a knowledge source in a large innovation program that aims to increase study success of undergraduates in a higher educational institute. This program involves several coaches supporting teacher teams, team leaders, directors, and boards on the job, with a focus on team work and leadership. Undergraduates are also involved in this program to help detect hindering and fostering factors for study success and provide advice in the design of advanced educational solutions. Also the professional field is involved as consultants to ensure alignment between their demands and the bachelor's programs and their assessments. Today, this innovation program covers 20 different professional bachelor's tracks. Again, the concepts, findings, and knowledge that arose from this PhD project serve as language tools to describe, understand, deepen, and reflect upon practices and develop new questions. Examples of this are that (1) team leaders are supported to ensure teacher teams have the opportunity to engage in shared team leadership behavior; (2) teacher teams are challenged to describe the need to collaborate and to define their team task; and (3) curriculum designers are encouraged to involve teachers in teams to develop new courses. Current coaches and new coaches follow a training program that was developed based on the findings in this dissertation, such as the benefits of utilizing shared team leadership behavior. Key and common professional development questions from teachers, team leaders, and curriculum designers that arise from the advising and training activities in this innovation program are currently collected, elaborated on, and translated into formal learning activities, in collaboration with the HR department. One of the collected subjects is about improving teacher team work and team leadership.

In addition, two chapters are being prepared in two upcoming handbooks that follow on from this dissertation. One chapter is an entry on leadership style in a forthcoming encyclopedia on higher education. Target groups for this

encyclopedia are advanced undergraduates and first-year graduate students. The other chapter is part of a forthcoming book on workplace learning. This chapter covers team learning and will be written in collaboration. The target group for this chapter are advanced undergraduates, graduates, and PhD students as well as practitioners and scholars who are not familiar with research on team learning.

FUTURE VALORIZATION OPPORTUNITIES

The fourth study in this dissertation (chapter 5) serves as a starting point for future research and valorization activities. The applied elicitation techniques covered in Study 4 offered insights into team leader cognitions. The findings indicated that team leader cognitions vary substantially. It appeared that team leaders do not necessarily hold a collective view on leadership (i.e., they hold various leadership perspectives) or diverse team factors (e.g., they use and recognize diverse team learning and leadership behaviors). However, this dissertation argues that team leaders who do hold a collective view are more able to interpret team situations, judge whether intervention is needed, and decide which team leadership behavior are most meaningful, based on the higher variety of leadership perspectives and team factors in their cognition. Future research and valorization activities are planned around designing development programs for teams and team leaders. Informed by Study 4, these programs should start by making team leaders aware of their cognitions, broadening their leadership perspectives, and increasing their understanding of their team's specific situation before focusing on effective team leadership behaviors. Research should accompany the design of these programs. The intention is to conduct longitudinal studies that (1) map team leader cognitions, (2) repeat that measure over time, (3) analyze if and to what extent the team leader cognitions have changed, and (4) interview team leaders on critical incidents that have occurred in the meantime. Based on those results, experimental studies could facilitate professional development interventions and test the extent to which they help team leaders to better adjust their behavior to specific situations. Another aim is to include teams in these interventions as well. Funding is currently being sought for these intentions. Moreover, the intended future research and valorization activities align with the newly proposed strategies of higher educational institutions to increase teacher team work and team leadership quality. This trend offers specific opportunities for practice to directly benefit from research and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

The main research question of this dissertation emerged from practice: how can team leadership behavior support learning behavior in university teacher teams working towards educational change? During the PhD project, this question appeared to be continuously relevant to teachers, teams, educational advisors, policy makers, boards, managers, team leaders, and HR departments. The conceptual models, methodology, and findings of the studies in this dissertation offered a rich source for many different workshops, presentations, round table sessions, advising activities, new approaches and policies, training programs, and reports. These valorization activities offer abundant examples of how to stimulate and facilitate teacher teamwork and its quality, as urged by the Dutch council for education (Onderwijsraad, 2016). The various valorization activities may also fuel awareness within higher educational institutions that effective teacher team work needs adequate support to prevent teachers from operating as individuals and teams only being established as a formal team structure (e.g., Van Middelkoop et al., 2018). Without adequate support, teams are merely a technical intervention that does not contribute to actual educational change.

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