



Chinese High School Students' Leadership Learning Needs and Strategy Choices

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ABSTRACT

A survey of 1800 high school students in Shanghai was conducted to examine the Chinese high school students' leadership learning needs and strategy choice. The results indicated that most of Chinese high school students have a strong interest in leadership learning. Gender, grade level, and school reputation affect the subjects' leadership learning needs and strategy choices to different degrees. To enhance youth leadership development, school education should expand student leadership development resources to promote active and efficient leadership learning among high school students. Youth education and other related institutions need to play a greater role in enriching the supply of youth leadership learning education.

Keywords: high school students; leadership learning; learning needs; learning strategies

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Chinese educators believe that "When the young generation has ideals, skills, and responsibilities, a country will have a future, and a nation will have hope." Any great nation will always turn its attention to the youth. It is a great challenge to respond to the urgent need for leaders who will meet the requirements of the new era in the rapidly developing world of politics, economy, and culture. The rational development and guidance of human resources for real and potential future leaders is an urgent issue for every educator to consider. The background, value, influencing factors, and learning strategies of leadership learning for high school students have been studied in depth. With the popularization of the concept of lifelong learning and the increasing internationalization of education, high school students have more and more learning opportunities to participate in international education competitions. When applying to prestigious universities abroad, whether a high school student has leadership skills may be an important condition that affects whether he or she can be admitted (Cui Wenxia, 2017). There also studies in China confirmed that Chinese high school teachers have a clear understanding of the necessity and feasibility of developing leadership in high school students at three levels: national society, school organization, and individual students. Most of these studies are positive (Yang Aina, 2017). High school students themselves also want to participate in leadership learning by engaging in it. This is because understanding leadership knowledge and skills can satisfy their own needs to lead themselves or others in the future, and continuously promote the understanding of self, others, and society as a whole, to contribute to society and realize the spiritual pursuit of life values (Komives, S. R., John. Dugan, 2011).

Therefore, the cultivation of top innovative talents has been suggested to become an important way for every country to enhance its international competitiveness. It is also an important aspect of educational reform and innovation. Improving leadership and innovation should foster secondary school levels (Yang Xiaomin., 2010).

Since leadership learning is so important for high school students' life development and even national development. Therefore, we need to understand what high school students' real needs for leadership learning are. We can provide them with appropriate content, resources, and strategies for leadership development, only by understanding their real needs and motivations for leadership learning. provide them with appropriate content, resources, and strategies for leadership development. An empirical study of Chinese high school students found that the students' self-esteem level had a significant impact on their leadership ability. The teacher-student relationship influences the development of high school student's ability to understand others, time management and task execution, and their development of organization and coordination ability. (Dai Mian, 2016) In addition, an in-depth interview study was conducted on 26 senior high school student leaders in three cities. The results show that senior high school students participate in leadership learning and early experience, interpersonal interaction, key events, measurement of gains and losses, democratic principles, motivation for running for leadership positions, and social support (Lu Deping, 2008).

So, what strategies do high school students choose for learning leadership? First, consider the students' developmental factors; second, go through leadership training, leadership education, and leadership development. Again, it is to consider the specific learning strategies and their corresponding teaching experiences that build on both of these (Cui Wenxia, 2017). These strategies are generally socio-cultural discussions, experiential learning, social service learning, team learning, peer education, and reflective practices. Interestingly, the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MLS), based on data from the National Leadership Institute Study, shows that the current top three most popular leadership learning strategies among students are experiential learning, socio-cultural discussion, and team learning. Of course, high school students' preferences that leadership learning may also manifest themselves in many other ways, such as content, place, and context (Bisland, A., Karnes, F. A., & Cobb, Y. B., 2004).

In recent years, the word "leadership" has become a common word in training and study tours in Shanghai, which has led to a rush of students and a large number of dissatisfied students. To date, no city-wide research has been conducted in the area of student leadership education and learning, making it difficult to understand the true leadership learning needs and strategy preferences of high school students in Shanghai. To this end, the study attempted to identify three aspects of leadership learning: 1. Shanghai high school students' overall leadership learning needs; 2. Shanghai high school students' leadership learning strategy preferences; 3. individual variables that influence Shanghai high school students' leadership learning and strategy choices. The above three aspects are important to understand the leadership learning needs and learning strategies of Shanghai high school students. both on and off-campus.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: background information (school, grade, gender, whether they are class leaders or club leaders, etc.); a leadership learning needs; and a

leadership learning strategy selection. The leadership learning needs questionnaire was based on the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI) developed by Karnes & Chauvin, supplemented by on-site observations and interviews of high school students. The leadership learning strategy questions were based on the Student Leadership Program (SLP) issued by the American Association for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS, 2015).

After compiling the questionnaire, we consulted 5 domestic and foreign experts on the content validity including rationality, suitability, and completeness of the questionnaire, and revised and improved the questionnaire according to their suggestions. After that, the author conducted questionnaire pretesting in two high schools, Songjiang No. 1 and No. 2, during December 2013-January 2014, and 694 valid questionnaires were returned. Then, the author used SPSS18.0 to conduct the missing value test, descriptive statistics testing, and reliability analysis.

A five-point scale was used in the questionnaire questions on leadership learning needs preference and strategy selection. The results showed that the mean values of each question item for leadership learning needs ranged from 2.86 to 4.52, and the mean values of each question item for learning strategy selection ranged from 3.43 to 4.11. The means were between 1.5 standard deviations above and below the overall mean, and the standard deviations met the criteria. The results of the reliability analysis show that the overall reliability of the leadership learning needs questionnaire is 0.943, the reliability of highlighting personal strengths is 0.896, the reliability of serving others is 0.875, and the reliability of participating in social change is 0.884. The overall reliability of the learning strategy selection questionnaire was 0.904, and the reliability of the leadership learning style, leadership learning channel, and leadership learning channel of other items was 0.885, 0.824, and 0.824. Thus, the reliability of each questionnaire item is good. The author fine-tuned the order of individual questions, optimized the format of the questionnaire, and re-consulted experts to finalize the official questionnaire based on the previous prediction. The sampling scope and methodology of the questionnaire were greatly improved. The questionnaire distribution was extended to high school students in Shanghai. The investigators distributed the questionnaires and short interviews on-site with the support of training institutions and some schools.

DATA COLLECTION

The author conducted the survey on high school students in Shanghai via the Internet during December 2020-February 2021. A total of 1,800 questionnaires were distributed. 158 questionnaires had more than 3 unanswered questions, which were regarded as invalid. A total of 1642 valid questionnaires were analyzed.

The survey respondents were both public and private high schools; the sampling range of student research covered senior 1, senior 2, and senior 3. The majority of the respondents were senior 3, and the number of senior 1 was slightly less than that of seniors, with 1.9% of the respondents not completing the survey (see Figure 1). Among the respondents, 67.7 percent were student leaders or club leaders, 30.2 percent were not, and 2.1 percent did not complete the survey. Most of the respondents (64.9%) have not participated in special leadership learning, while 34.3% have participated in leadership-related activities or lectures and 0.8% have not filled in the form.

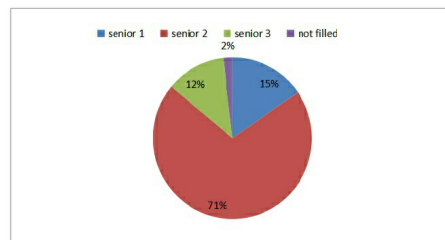


Figure 1 Grade distribution of survey respondents

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

High School Students are Generally Eager for Leadership Learning and Want to Highlight Their Advantages

Generally speaking, in terms of the willingness of leadership learning, most of the respondents (82.7%) think that leadership learning is particularly important and necessary, while only 13.4% think that leadership learning is not important and 3.9% did not answer (see Figure 2). Those who preferred the schedule of leadership learning to be 2 semesters accounted for 20.5%, those who were willing to devote 1 semester accounted for 50.6%, those who were willing to devote half a semester accounted for 20.8%, and those who did not fill in the form accounted for 8.1% (see Figure 3). Survey respondents had different levels of need for leadership learning to highlight personal strengths, serve others, and participate in social change (see Figure 4). The highest mean value of demand was for highlighting personal strengths (4.75), followed by the demand for leadership learning related to participating in social change (4.38), and the lower demand for leadership learning related to serving others (3.42). Among the leadership learning needs that highlight personal strengths, the highest scores were for "competitions and selections to demonstrate leadership at critical times" (mean value 4.79), "study abroad for leadership development" (mean value 4.65), and "understand and It is easy to see that all three items have a mean value greater than 4.5 (see Figure 5), indicating that leadership learning has become an important topic for high school students, and that learning leadership to highlight personal strengths is more important than serving others. There are two questions with mean values less than 4.24, indicating a low level of demand: creating your own company (3.29) and helping others to lead (3.93).

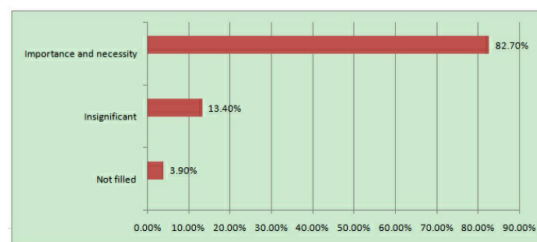


Figure 2 Willingness to leadership learning

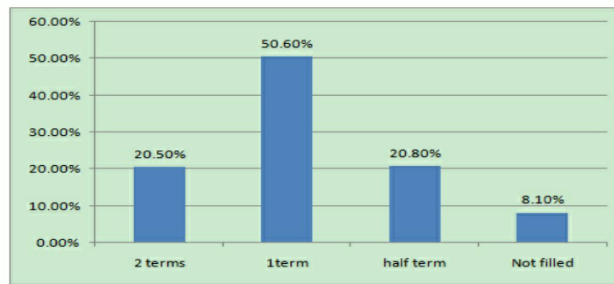


Figure 3 Preference for the time commitment to prepare for leadership learning



Figure 4 Leadership learning purpose and need level preferences

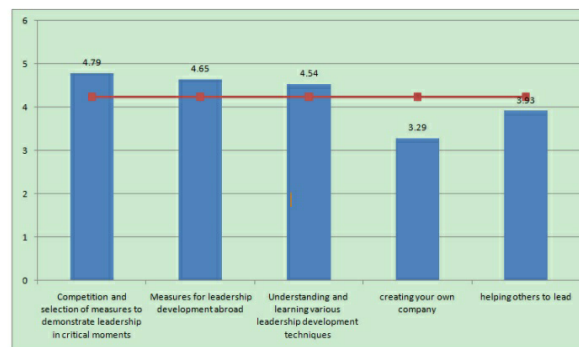


Figure 5 Mean value of question items in leadership learning highlighting personal strengths

Previous foreign studies have examined the impact of high school students' leadership on their values, and Reynolds, F. J (Reynolds, 2014) states that high school students who have been

leaders are more willing to participate in school activities and have higher levels of leadership involvement than students who are not leaders. In addition, these students who were leaders had higher grades, intelligence, and personality expression than those who were not leaders (Dai Mian, 2016). However, this study found that respondents' demands for leadership learning were more focused on personal strengths than serving others and participating in social change. Which to some extent suggests that China's current selection exams and multi-faceted academic competition force high school students to learn more about leadership to make themselves more competitive. If high school students do not develop correct leadership learning concepts and values through leadership education programs, the long-term social consequences will be very serious. Susan R. Komives, a well-known American leadership education advocate and tenured professor, said that a leader is a person who can accomplish something with more people for a common goal to promote social change (Komives, S. R., John. Dugan, 2012).

Leadership Learning Strategy Selection Preferences with Experiential and Team-based Learning

The survey respondents also had certain preferences in their leadership learning strategy choices. The investigation focuses on six learning strategies, they are namely, socio-cultural discussion, experiential learning, group learning, social service learning, peer education, and meditation practice (Cui Wenxia, 2017). The results showed that most respondents focused on experiential learning and group learning as the main strategies, both of which had an average of more than 4.6, and leadership learning strategies and peer education as the main strategies scored the lowest (mean 3.52)(see Figure 6). The reason for this preference of learning strategies may be that high school life is more depressing, with heavy academic tasks and a thirst for enriching leadership experiences, and as for choosing team learning it is the adolescent high school students who are energetic and willing to participate in teamwork and learning. However, to the author's surprise, respondents listed peer education as the preferred leadership learning strategy, which corresponds to the above finding that leadership learning is required to highlight individual strengths, which the author believes is due in part to the intense competition among too many academic peers.

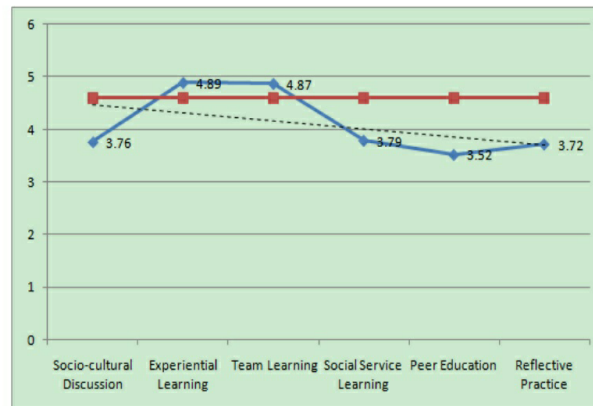


Figure 6 Leadership Learning Strategy Selection Preferences

The Influencing Factors for Leadership Learning Needs

The analysis results show that female students, senior two students, student leaders or community leaders, and students of municipal key senior high schools have higher demands for leadership learning. The t-test and comparative study results showed that the four variables of respondents' gender, grade level, whether they were student leaders or club leaders, and school reputation all showed significant differences in the effects of their leadership learning needs. The specific results were.

Female students have a stronger need for leadership learning than male students. This result is generally consistent with the findings of an existing study on leadership literacy among college students (Xu Xiaolin et al., 2004): in college, female students have higher leadership learning needs and desire to lead than male students. This can also explain why there are more and more female students serving as student leaders or club leaders at the high school or college level today, which also reflects the increasing awareness of women in highlighting their values, serving others and participating in social change, and can also indicate the self-awakening of women in terms of their self-worth and social value, and that female students have a clearer choice than male students in terms of leadership learning content, Girls are more explicit and diverse than boys in their choices of leadership learning content, learning strategies, etc.

The demand for leadership learning is higher among senior 2 students than juniors. However, it was further found that senior 3 showed high demand for leadership measures in applying to study abroad. This shows that senior three students attach great importance to leadership learning under the great pressure of study and domestic college entrance examination, so as to prepare for applying for going abroad in the future., and show high demand for whether off-campus institutional training can provide quality leadership intensive camps and volunteer service communities, etc. There is a great demand for quality leadership camps and volunteer communities.

The demand for student leaders or club leaders was higher than that of those who did not serve. This also suggests, to some extent, that students are interested in leadership learning because

of the realities of classroom leadership or club leadership. On the one hand, this is because anyone would consider the need in terms of their actual life, work, and learning experiences and would like to learn more leadership knowledge and skills to put into their current leadership experiences, and on the other hand, it reflects the lack of curriculum and resources about leadership learning and experiences in current school education and the lack of related school-based curriculum development.

Previous studies have not specifically focused on and addressed the school's region, reputation, or culture, and mission. However, this study unexpectedly found that students in slightly more suburban, city-focused high schools had higher levels of preference for leadership learning needs and strategy choices. The existence of certain differences in leadership learning needs between regions suggests that factors such as school culture, integration of curriculum resources, and community involvement linkages do have some influence on students' learning needs and strategy choice preferences.

The Influencing Factors for Leadership Learning Strategy Choice

As far as the respondents' choice of learning strategies is concerned, the t-test results show that the two variables of gender and whether the respondents are student leaders (club leaders) show significant differences in their choice of leadership learning strategies, while the two variables of grade level and school reputation do not show significant differences on their choice of leadership learning strategies. The influence of grade and school reputation on leadership learning strategy choice is not significant. The specific results of the study were that girls preferred the choice of leadership strategies over boys, favoring experiential learning and teamwork. The preference of student cadres is higher than that of non-student cadres and student cadres, indicating that individual students may have the ability and consciousness to actively judge and choose leadership learning strategies when they have the need for leadership.

The study also found that the leadership learning strategies chosen by high school students in some well-known high schools and international schools, such as study tours, investigations, and debates, are closely related to their actual school curriculum resources and school-based curriculum development, which also reflects the campus culture that more and more high schools are beginning to pay attention to the development of students' core literacy and key competencies.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

More Visionary about Youth Leadership Development

The words "leader" and "leadership" should be understood at the social level, to overcome the literal meaning of traditional Chinese culture that against the backdrop of increasingly fierce global competition in the economy, science and technology, culture, and overall national strength. If China is to fulfill its historic responsibility of national rejuvenation must make higher demands on the next generation of young people who carry the promise of the Chinese nation. They should not only expand and strengthen their global vision, strategic thinking, and collaborative consciousness (Cui Wenxia and Huang Zhicheng, 2014), but also explore and cultivate their cross-cultural leadership potential so that they can show the quality and spirit of "leadership" in the future global dialogue. Actively leading the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Develop More Leadership Development Resources to Promote Active Learning among High School Students

School-specific circumstances need to be considered in terms of student leadership development resources (Lin Shaohui, 2016). Generally speaking, development resources include campus size and type, campus culture and available resources, etc., but the leadership development resources that this study focuses on are mainly the teaching resources of schools, and the scope is further reduced to formal leadership programs. The scope and type of these programs can be classified as single, experiential, multi-dimensional, etc. They can be designed as formal leadership programs or informal leadership programs, and they can also be designed to be directed to individuals or groups (Haber, P, 2010). Therefore, each school can design and plan a series of formal leadership programs according to its conditions to promote students' conditions for active leadership learning and experience.

Youth Education and Other Related Institutions Need to Play a Greater Role in Enriching the Supply of Leadership Learning Education

The number of youth education institutions should not be small, but most of them are engaged in large-scale "remedial" work for students during weekends and holidays in the context of exam-oriented education. The development and expansion of core literacy and key competencies of youth have not yet been implemented. According to surveys and visits, the children's Palace and educational institutions around Shanghai are overloaded, and their enrollment is increasing year by year.

But in terms of training programs and extension courses, they are mostly directly related to the high school entrance exam, although some core literacy and key skills development courses are limited to the fourth grade of primary school. Based on the results of this study, the existing social education institutions, especially the children's Palace and community education centers, should add youth leadership education, youth rule of law education, youth artificial intelligence education, etc. Which can not only help young people get a different experience from school learning, but also help them get the expansion and enhancement of core literacy and key competencies for the 21st century.

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