

Enhancing Educational Outcomes through Educative Leadership: A Case Study of GDUFS

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of educative leadership and its impact on enhancing educational outcomes in international higher education. Drawing on theoretical frameworks of stewardship, cultural development, moral literacy, and emotional well-being, the study examines how educative leadership is practiced at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS). Using a case study approach, the paper analyzes the influence of leadership strategies on cultural inclusivity, moral values, and emotional resilience among teachers and students. Findings highlight both strengths and challenges in fostering a supportive learning environment, emphasizing the importance of intercultural competence, ethical decision-making, and emotional support systems. The study concludes that effective educative leadership not only improves academic performance but also cultivates holistic growth, preparing students and educators to navigate global complexities.

Keywords: Educative leadership; international education; cultural inclusivity; moral literacy; emotional well-being; Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS)

1. Overview of Educative Leadership

Effective school leadership is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in the success and improvement of educational institutions. According to a number of studies, school leadership is essential to improving schools (Leithwood et al., 2008; Walker & Qian, 2020). Furthermore, Gurr and Drysdale (2020) stress that leadership is the key to success in the classroom and for students. In particular, the practice of leading is what is meant to be understood by the term "leadership" (Raelin, 2016). This is the subject of our discussion. This viewpoint is consistent with Cuban's (1988) definition of educative leadership as the ability to influence others to achieve specific objectives. As a result, this point of view highlights the significance of interactions that inspire others. The leaders' strategies and tools, which aid in putting their ideas into practice, influence these interactions. Moreover, Kooiman (2001) and Hawkins & James (2016) contend that the strategies employed by leaders and their perception of their position have an impact on these interactions.

As educators and policymakers work to improve educational outcomes, the idea of educative leadership has received a lot of attention lately. Chatelier (2022) promotes the use of educative leadership over traditional models by leaders of international schools. This strategy is essential because, while fostering equity and intercultural understanding, international schools frequently educate privileged students, which contradicts their stated purpose. The emphasis on creating an atmosphere that supports students' overall development as well as academic achievement is what defines educative leadership. Meanwhile, the incorporation of moral, cultural, and emotional dimensions is imperative in equipping students to effectively navigate intricate societal challenges.

This paper delves into the theoretical foundations of educative leadership and applies them to a strategic analysis of practices at my own international school. By assessing the positive and negative aspects of these practices, the paper hopes to identify strategies that effectively improve educational outcomes. The

study aims to contribute to the discussion on the role of leadership in education by highlighting the importance of creating environments that foster the development of leaders, including teachers and students.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Understanding Educative Leadership

2.1.1 Definition and Key Concepts

Concerning issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion, international schools confront a variety of challenges. When addressing difficult and contentious issues, educative leadership is especially suitable for international schools (Chatelier 2022). According to Rizvi (1992), "educative leadership should be seen as located in particular acts which serve to bring people together and make the possibility of intercultural understanding greater," rather than in individuals or institutional positions.

This approach serves to "create conditions that enable school communities to collaboratively understand, and hopefully oppose, the construction and maintenance of inequalities evident" in their policies, programs, and practices. It emphasizes the value of practical, community-oriented leadership efforts and the role that group actions play in creating meaningful and effective educational experiences.

According to Duignan and Macpherson (1992), educative leadership is a "deliberate attempt at cultural elaboration," which is a dialectical process that modifies peoples' patterns of assumptions and relationships by partially resolving inevitable conflict and clarifying values. This means that by actively forming and improving an educational institution's values, beliefs, and norms, educative leadership aims to consciously cultivate and improve the culture within it.

2.1.2 Theoretical Frameworks (Characteristic):

The main characteristic of educative leadership is stewardship because it emphasizes creating an environment where individuals are empowered and prepared to lead, govern, educate, and motivate themselves. According to Block (1996), "Stewardship was a means of protecting a kingdom while those rightfully in charge were away, or, more often, to govern for the sake of the underage king. As a result, a steward is preoccupied with creating the conditions that will boost an individual's confidence in leading, governing, educating, and motivating themselves. The primary role of stewardship is to set the stage rather than to perform on it." Stewardship in educative leadership entails empowering others, creating supportive environments, encouraging independence, promoting continuous development, and ensuring long-term success. By exemplifying stewardship, educational leaders create a culture in which individuals are motivated and equipped to lead and innovate, benefiting both the educational community and society as a whole by producing capable and confident leaders.

But what defines a steward leader? Allan explains this using the metaphors of "footprint" and "fingerprint" in his IELC lecture notes for Educative Leadership (Stewardship) 2024. This approach works well because "metaphors in education can serve as an entrance for gaining new insights into education theory and practice" (Jensen, 2006). The "fingerprint" represents the tangible, practical elements of the head and hand, which include the skills, competence, and abilities required for effective task performance. In contrast, the "footprint" represents the intangible, emotional, and ethical dimensions of the heart, mind, conscience, and soul, emphasizing relationships, beliefs, and leaving a lasting, positive legacy. To have a long-lasting positive impact, effective leadership must strike a balance between practical skills and a deep ethical and

emotional impact. As stewards, leaders embody this balance, having a significant impact on those they lead and leaving a meaningful legacy. And (Starratt, 2003) believes that educative leadership is both intellectually and morally grounded, with a mix of human, professional, and civic concerns; it is the work of creating a learning environment that is both humanly fulfilling and socially responsible.

2.2 Enhancing Cultural, Moral, and Emotional Outcomes

It is not sufficient to define educative leadership in terms of the attitudes, styles, and behaviors that are the traditional components of leadership that are highlighted in the literature on educational administration. Rather, it should be focused on methods of understanding organizations and leadership styles that are expressed in the group's, the institution's, or the culture (Greenfield, 1985).

Understanding the core principles and characteristics of educative leadership provides a foundation for exploring its broader impacts. With a clear grasp of what defines educative leadership, we can now delve into how these principles translate into tangible outcomes in educational settings. It is essential to examine how educative leadership influences not just the academic realm but also the cultural, moral, and emotional dimensions of student development. This transition allows us to connect the theoretical framework of educative leadership with its practical implications, highlighting the comprehensive nature of this leadership approach.

2.2.1 Cultivating a Positive School Culture

The topic of organizational culture is currently one of the keystones for comprehending how schools foster equity, inclusion, and democracy—far from having reached its theoretical and empirical limits (Torres, 2022). By establishing clear performance standards and seeing to it that the school community internalizes them, educative leadership plays a critical role in fostering a positive school culture. Within an institution, culture establishes the standards for successful performance. When members embrace these standards, they concentrate on meeting them, which improves overall performance outcomes (Cheung et al., 2011; Lunenburg, 2011). Educative leaders can greatly increase a number of metrics, such as productivity, job satisfaction, and overall performance, by cultivating a strong and positive organizational culture (Ilham, 2018; Ismail et al., 2015). Additionally, by embracing and advancing cultural values, leaders can motivate their workforce in all areas linked to the objectives of the company, resulting in a productive and inspiring work environment (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012). This helps staff and students alike by improving the school's operational effectiveness and fostering a positive, supportive environment.

2.2.2 Promoting Moral Values

Moral values are the principles and standards that help people decide what is right and wrong and how to live moral lives. These are the guiding principles that shape actions and choices. These moral principles are promoted when leadership cultivates a positive school culture by establishing a setting that values hard work, teamwork, and continual development. Effective school cultures, according to Fullan (2005), create progressive interactions where rigorous processes yield creative ideas as well as social cohesion. Focusing on value-added high expectations for everyone, developing capabilities, encouraging unity, and keeping a constant drive for improvement are what feed this sense of moral purpose.

Begley and Johansson (2003) point out that school leaders deal with a variety of ethical dilemmas and value conflicts, which makes their jobs more complicated and uncertain. According to Bogotch (2000), educative leadership entails purposeful interventions that call for the moral use of power in order to overcome these obstacles. In order to promote moral principles and affect positive results, leaders must use their power

in an ethical manner.

For school leaders, moral literacy has become essential. This calls for the capacity to make morally sound decisions in a setting that is complicated and frequently unclear, as well as to support others in doing so (Begley and Johansson, 2003). Educative leaders cultivate and apply moral literacy to inform their decision-making, guaranteeing that their actions are consistent with moral standards and uphold an environment that is morally sound for learning.

2.2.3 Addressing Emotional Well-being

By acknowledging and addressing the emotional demands that come with being a teacher or a leader in a school, educative leadership promotes the mental health of both parties. Leaders' emotional health is greatly impacted by the demands of their jobs, particularly school principals. According to Maxwell (2017), principals had considerably lower wellbeing scores than the general population in addition to significantly higher scores on emotional demands at work, burnout, and job satisfaction. This decrease in wellbeing is crucial because, as Hallinger and Heck (1998) point out, school principals' capacity to have a major impact on student engagement, school functioning, and overall school wellbeing all decreases when their own wellbeing declines.

Emotional well-being is equally important for teachers. "Emotions are intimately involved in virtually every aspect of the teaching and learning process," according to Schutz and Lanehart (2002), so it is crucial to comprehend the nature of emotions in the context of schools. In order to successfully carry out their job's emotional demands and engage in harmonious interactions with both coworkers and students, teachers must be able to control their emotions (Lee & Yin, 2011). This need is especially noticeable when there is ongoing educational reform, as these are times when emotions are usually running high in the classroom (Day, 2011; Fullan, 2007). Craig (2013) employs the metaphor of "The Monkey's Paw" to highlight the difficulties and unforeseen consequences that educators encounter when implementing these changes. Teachers are portrayed in this metaphor as the characters who wish for good things (better education) and implement reforms, only to deal with unanticipated consequences that complicate both their careers and their students' educational experiences. Thus, putting an emphasis on emotional wellbeing in educative leadership facilitates leaders' and teachers' ability to effectively manage their emotional demands, improving their overall effectiveness and having a positive effect on the school climate.

3. Key educative leadership practices at GDUFS

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS), a prestigious institution in Guangdong Province, has established itself as a hub for internationalization and expertise in foreign languages, cultures, and international strategies.

At GDUFS, there's this standout department called the International College, which was established back in 2004. They're all about pushing the boundaries in education, especially with their 2+2 International Undergraduate Transfer Program. This program is pretty unique—it lets students spend two years studying in China and then transfer to partner universities abroad for the next two years, earning a degree that holds weight globally.

One of GDUFS's big focuses is on internationalization and foreign languages. They really emphasize the importance of understanding different cultures and perspectives. They blend rigorous academics with global exposure, giving students a comprehensive education that's designed to prepare them for a world that's

becoming more interconnected by the day. Plus, they've teamed up with some top-notch universities abroad, so students can be confident they're getting a quality education that'll open doors worldwide.

Beyond academics, GDUFS also prioritizes the moral, cultural, and emotional growth of both students and teachers. They're not just about churning out book-smart individuals; they want to shape well-rounded individuals who can thrive in various aspects of life. I'll delve into how effective their strategies are by looking at examples and evidence from the school, analyzing both their strengths and areas for improvement when it comes to nurturing students' overall well-being.

3.1. Impact on Cultural Outcomes

At GDUFS, especially in its international programs, the cultural vibe is heavily influenced by educative leadership. Leaders who champion cultural values create positive and supportive work environments by inspiring both teachers and students to align with the school's goals. It's crucial for administrators of international schools to take this approach seriously, as noted by Chatelier (2022). Despite differences in beliefs and customs, leaders need to understand, relate to, and engage with their communities to make a real impact, as highlighted by Walker et al. (2007).

GDUFS offers a range of intercultural programs and activities that celebrate diversity and encourage cultural exchange. Since most students are Chinese and teachers come from various countries, these programs play a vital role in bridging cultural gaps and fostering mutual understanding. The professional development workshops on cultural competency are a prime example of how GDUFS promotes a positive cultural environment for its teachers. These workshops provide sessions where teachers can learn about Chinese culture and discuss case studies to better handle cultural differences in the classroom. When teachers are more culturally aware and sensitive, they can create inclusive and supportive learning environments, particularly for Chinese students.

As for students, the summer overseas study program is a standout example. Each year, GDUFS partners with US universities to offer a summer session program for students looking to earn extra college credits. Beyond just credits, this program exposes students to local cultures, enhances their language skills, and boosts their chances of getting into top universities worldwide. It's a win-win that promotes intercultural understanding and provides positive experiences for the school community. Overall, the program significantly broadens students' global perspectives and enriches the educational environment.

Leaders at GDUFS foster an inclusive and encouraging environment that motivates both faculty and students to actively engage with the school's diverse cultural landscape by embracing and promoting cultural values. This strategy is essential for inspiring the school community and guaranteeing that mutual respect and cultural awareness are fundamental to the learning process. However, Chinese leaders at GDUFS still have particular difficulties managing international staff and initiatives. Osler (2006) points out that the majority of the literature on leadership assumes a predominantly white, male leadership and diverse client groups, which leaves out important information necessary for multi-ethnic schooling. I can really relate to this. Even with some initiatives, leaders at GDUFS continue to face formidable obstacles in their efforts to foster a positive workplace culture. To tackle these issues, our leaders ought to concentrate on cultivating efficient communication techniques, proactively attempting to comprehend and incorporate varied viewpoints, and offering ongoing cultural competency education to guarantee a genuinely inclusive atmosphere.

3.2. Impact on Moral Outcomes

Educative leadership practices (GDUFS) have a significant impact on the moral outcomes of teachers and students. Moral literacy teaches leaders a complex set of skills, abilities, and habits that can be developed and enhanced in schools and are aligned with the needs, goals, and aspirations of their communities (Tuana, 2003). Understanding this stuff helps leaders at GDUFS create an environment where ethics are front and center in decision-making. They see moral leadership as steering the school through various improvements, like making sure everyone's treated fairly and boosting how well students do in class, all while making sure decisions are solid and defendable (Walker et al., 2007). This approach ensures that everyone involved feels valued and gets what they need fair and square. Plus, they believe in building up what they call "moral literacy," which isn't just about knowing right from wrong—it's about getting clued in on knowledge, empathy, virtues, and skills to tackle tough ethical dilemmas with confidence and integrity.

To ramp up moral literacy, the leaders at GDUFS set up mentorship programs for both faculty and students. They even came up with an award to recognize folks who show exceptional moral behavior in their day-to-day lives. Students got involved too, pitching in for community service projects like food drives and cleaning up the environment. And for teachers, they organized workshops to help them handle sticky ethical situations and create a teaching vibe that's all about morals. But hey, not everything's smooth sailing. Some students just went through the motions, more worried about looking good than doing genuine service. This showed they needed more structured reflection to really get the moral lessons.

To tackle these bumps in the road, GDUFS could set up things like mandatory reflection journals and group chats for students after they do community service. That way, they can dive deeper and really think about the moral stuff they've learned. And for teachers, how about setting up a system where they can watch each other teach and give feedback? That could help everyone get better at this moral leadership thing. Plus, throwing in some perks like certificates or shout-outs for teachers who really get into those workshops could help boost participation. With these tweaks, GDUFS can make sure its moral leadership programs hit the mark and benefit both students and teachers.

Lastly, making moral decisions isn't easy. Leaders at GDUFS know they've got to keep challenging themselves and help others figure out where they stand (Walker et al., 2007). So they're thinking about teaming up with experts from US universities to run sessions on moral literacy. These sessions will be all about chatting through case studies, getting into group discussions, and even doing role-play to help leaders develop their ethical skills and understand others better. Plus, leaders know they've got to keep the community in the loop and get everyone talking about morals. That means setting up a shared moral purpose, tackling tricky topics, celebrating differences, and making sure everyone feels like they belong.

3.3 Impact on Emotional Outcomes

Effective leadership practices have a big impact on both students' and leaders' emotional well-being. In order to make learning a shared experience for all members of the educational community, leadership in education is a complex process that requires managing structural changes and fostering a collective understanding (Lambert, 1998). The dynamic quality of leadership has a variety of effects on emotional results.

3.3.1 Leaders' Emotional Well-being

Leadership positions in education are inherently demanding, with school principals bearing the brunt of the burden. They are in charge of implementing changes and managing the numerous demands that constantly infiltrate their workplaces. These demands have an impact on all aspects of their lives, frequently overwhelming them with emotions (Crawford, 2018).

A case study from GDUFS demonstrates the emotional challenges leaders face. When the results of university transfers do not meet the expectations of parents and students after two years of study because students did not meet the English proficiency requirements when applying for the program, leaders must still admit these students to ensure the school's financial viability through increased tuition income in the early years. In this scenario, leaders must balance institutional survival with stakeholder expectations, which can be emotionally taxing.

Principals who acknowledge and strategically use their own and others' emotions are better prepared to face leadership challenges and guide their schools toward success (Cliffe, 2016). A principal, for example, may use emotional intelligence to navigate difficult conversations with dissatisfied parents, not only by finding common ground but also by offering practical solutions such as suggesting alternative countries for study or recommending different majors for students with lower GPAs to make college admissions easier.

3.3.2 Teachers' Emotional Well-being

Teachers face significant emotional demands, especially when meeting academic requirements for credentialing to teach US university General Education courses. These requirements include submitting syllabi and course outlines, understanding college assessment policies, and attending training sessions. Teachers' emotional well-being depends on their ability to effectively manage these demands.

Teachers at GDUFS may feel overwhelmed by the need to prepare detailed work while adhering to rigorous credentialing standards. To deal with this pressure, we encourage teachers to participate in professional development opportunities provided by partnered US university professors to improve their skills in areas such as how to prioritize tasks based on deadlines and importance, seek support and collaborate with colleagues to share resources and strategies, and use available resources to make use of institutional resources such as templates for course outlines and learning assessment policies. Research suggests that effective teachers who manage their emotions have higher levels of teaching efficacy and personal well-being (Beltman and Poulton, 2019; Burić and Macuka, 2018; Berkovich and Eyal, 2019). These teachers can better navigate the pressures of their profession, increasing their effectiveness and emotional resilience.

3.3.3 Students' Emotional Well-being

In the GDUFS program, anxiety and bullying issues have become increasingly common, with cases rising each year. Students' emotional well-being is also profoundly impacted by educative leadership practices. Anxiety can arise when students struggle to keep up with their studies. We find that there are several factors contribute to this including academic pressure of rigorous academic demands, lack of independent study skills and insufficient emotional and psychological support system for students. Additionally, incidents of bullying can exacerbate emotional distress among students whether due to differences in language, culture, or academic performance, further contribute to the emotional distress experienced by students.

The combination of these factors creates a difficult environment for our students, which has a significant impact on their emotional wellbeing. Unfortunately, GDFS does not offer much assistance to students in meeting this challenge. I believe a comprehensive approach is necessary, such as having student mentorship programs, which pair students with faculty members or older students who can offer guidance and support, helping them navigate academic and social challenges; anti-bullying campaigns, which raise awareness about the effects of bullying and promote a culture of respect and inclusion; and emotional support programs, such as counseling services, which offer one-on-one and group counseling. GDUFS should also provide teacher training to help students manage and mitigate negative emotions. These series of trainings could include the topics of emotional intelligence training: This involves identifying negative emotional

triggers and developing effective coping strategies. Conflict Resolution Skills: Provide teachers with conflict resolution skills to assist them in mediating student disputes and responding to incidents of bullying in a timely and effective manner. Encourage teachers to conduct regular check-ins with their students to monitor their emotional well-being and offer assistance as needed. Professional Development Workshops: Provide ongoing training on mental health awareness, stress management, and a positive classroom environment, among other topics.

Through the implementation of a comprehensive program for student emotional support and the provision of focused teacher training, GDUFS will effectively address the growing number of cases of bullying and anxiety. By fostering a safer and more encouraging learning environment, this strategy not only helps raise student satisfaction but also improves academic and emotional outcomes for all students.

3.3.4 Interpersonal Challenges and Burnout

At GDUFS Interactions between leadership and staff members can occasionally result in job dissatisfaction and burnout. Burnout is greatly impacted by ongoing interactions with parents and staff, frequently more so than by the sheer amount of work (Friedman, 2002). Principals must develop into "emotional leaders" due to the emotionally taxing nature of their work (Bush, 2018).

A principal at GDUFS is experiencing high levels of stress and burnout as a result of constant demands from both parents and staff. The principal frequently deals with parental complaints about academic performance as well as staff conflicts over teaching methods and workload. These constant interactions leave the principal feeling overwhelmed and emotionally exhausted, reducing their effectiveness and overall well-being.

GDUFS should provide educational solutions to promote improvement. A step-by-step action plan could include implementing a distributed leadership model among vice principals and department heads, collaborating with a reputable educative leadership organization to schedule workshops on resilience, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills, ensuring continuous assessment and feedback, conducting a survey to assess emotional wellness needs such as the Teacher Emotion Inventory (TEI), and more.

According to Federici and Skaalvik (2012) and Lee et al. (2010), burnout is a multifaceted concept of "ill-being" characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment caused by prolonged workplace stress, and it should not be ignored by GDUFS leadership. By implementing these emotional management strategies, educational leaders can improve their overall effectiveness and reduce job dissatisfaction and burnout.

4. Conclusion

I now have a solid understanding of educative leadership thanks to my studies and writing of this paper. I was able to examine the idea's theoretical underpinnings and evaluate the leadership styles used by my own school thanks to this project. Therefore, I have acquired a more profound and sophisticated understanding of the practical application of educative leadership and its significant impact on my educational outcomes.

Analyzing the leadership dynamics at my institution has been especially insightful. It provided a concrete context for applying the theories and models I discovered in the literature. This practical analysis reinforced my understanding of educative leadership while also highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of our current practices. Such insights are invaluable in identifying areas for improvement and creating an

environment that truly promotes the holistic development of staff and students.

Furthermore, the studies into the literature revealed the existence of various leadership models within the larger framework of educative leadership. There are numerous leadership theories and processes that describe leadership processes in organizations in general (Ladkin, 2010), as well as educative leadership (Bush & Glover, 2014). Normative leadership styles, such as servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002), strategic leadership (Davies and Davies, 2004), invitational leadership (Egley, 2003), ethical leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006), constructivist leadership (Lambert, 2002a), sustainable leadership (Hargreaves, 2007), transformational leadership (Bass, 1990), and others, are commonly used in educational settings. Each of these models provides unique perspectives and strategies that can help to achieve the overall goal of educative leadership. This discovery has prompted me to consider future research that focuses on these specific leadership models. Future studies that conduct more detailed analyses of each model can provide deeper insights into their distinct contributions and effectiveness in various educational contexts.

In conclusion, this paper has greatly improved my understanding of educative leadership and its application in real-world settings. It has also opened up new avenues for future research, implying that a more focused examination of specific leadership models could produce useful results for educators and policymakers. This reflection emphasizes the value of ongoing learning and adaptation in the pursuit of effective educative leadership.

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