

Teacher Leadership and the Connotative Development of Eco-Vocational Colleges

Zheyu Cheng¹, Jinglong Luo¹, Xu Jiang¹, Yizheng Fu^{2*}, Wei Zhang^{1*}

¹Guangdong Eco-Engineering Polytechnic, Guangzhou, China

²School of Economics and Management, Xiamen University of Technology, Xiamen, China

Email: *2021000089@xmut.edu.cn, *zw0915@163.com

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Abstract

This study centers on ecological science cluster construction in higher vocational colleges, revealing systemic obstacles like a mismatch between talent supply and industry demand, and limited industry-education integration, which are exacerbated by industrial restructuring and talent paradigm shifts. It advocates building a collaborative innovation ecosystem led by teacher agency. Unlike hierarchical models, teacher leadership (TL) is a distributed, non-positional influence system where educators leverage expertise, dedication, and moral power to transform curricula, culture, learner agency, and industry innovation. A dialectical theory-practice approach deconstructs TL's mediating role, rebuilding the discipline ecosystem, breaking bureaucratic constraints, and enhancing teacher identity and capability. Integrating distributed leadership with critical institutionalism creates a heterogeneous management framework, enabling teachers to become educational innovation co-creators, balancing operational efficiency and connotative growth in higher vocational education.

Keywords

Teacher Leadership, Connotative Development, Eco-Vocational Colleges, Distributed Leadership, Mechanism Innovation

1. Introduction

In recent years, the field of higher vocational education in China has shown a continuous expansion trend. However, as its scale continues to expand, a series of systemic challenges still need to be addressed, manifested in structural imbalances, poor quality, and the lack of a distinct and unique institutional identity. With the continuous promotion of the process of higher education popularization, the competitive pressure in the employment market has increased significantly.

Focusing on the fields of ecology related disciplines, such as ecological protection, environmental management and green technology, graduates face more severe resistance and challenges when entering the labor market (He et al., 2018). The root cause is mainly the mismatch of two key levels: 1) the path and channel of talent training failed to achieve effective docking with the actual demand trend of industrial development; 2) there is still a gap and deviation between the existing education quality assurance system and the national certification standards.

Although the teacher education and engineering certification framework implemented by the country has made steady progress, some elite institutions have relied on their resource advantages to promote certification work, forming a positive demonstration effect. However, most ecological vocational colleges are still trapped in the dilemma of institutional path dependence, including significant differences in student abilities, insufficient rationality in teacher composition, and prominent teaching inertia. These factors are intertwined and jointly hinder their professional certification process and the improvement of institutional reputation.

Faced with the current deep-seated challenges, ecological vocational colleges urgently need to achieve a paradigm shift in development, from the outward expansion of quantity to the internal mode of focusing on quality improvement and unique institutional identity construction. This transformation focuses on deepening the quality of education and aims to shape a distinctive institutional culture and brand value recognition. The high-quality teaching staff, as the fundamental support for improving the quality of education, is a key element in achieving the transformation of colleges. However, the calibration of ecological vocational colleges faces a dual human resource dilemma, with insufficient faculty and significant deficiencies in structural rationality, professional competence, and development vitality. Given the limitations of external talent market recruitment and the long and slow effectiveness of internal training cycles, college managers need to adopt a systematic human capital development strategy to deeply tap into the potential value of existing faculty and establish an endogenous human resource value-added mechanism, in order to break through the constraints of human resource bottlenecks on college transformation.

The philosophy of leadership and management paradigm need to be fundamentally reconstructed. Through mechanism innovation and organizational culture reshaping, systematically stimulate teachers' endogenous professional leadership effectiveness. Release the professional autonomy and innovative potential of teachers in order to form a self reinforcing dynamic mechanism (Rashid et al., 2022; Windawati & Irfan, 2021). This mechanism has effectively driven the sustained connotative development of colleges. Among them, the cultivation of distributed leadership ecosystem is the core nature, effectively breaking the hierarchical boundaries, and collaborative professional knowledge network has become the leading force in promoting institutional reform.

2. Leadership, Leadership Capability, and Teacher Leadership

2.1. Leadership

Leadership is the comprehensive embodiment of the ability and potential quality of a leader. From the perspective of essence, leadership shows that subordinates or team members highly trust leaders and are willing to follow them to actively participate in various affairs. The core connotation of this concept requires leaders to have a clear attitude, a strong sense of responsibility, excellent strategic planning ability and a broad mind pattern.

Leadership is a complex concept with multiple dimensions. In the field of higher education, it is not only the key element for the establishment and maintenance of formal authority, but also an important support for professional influence. From the academic perspective, leadership presents the characteristics of dialectical unity, covering the process dimension, reflected in the dynamic process of leaders' daily speech communication, behavior demonstration and decision-making guidance; It also includes the position dimension, which is based on the nominal power and responsibility given by specific positions (Singh et al., 2024).

In terms of position dimension, it clearly defines the responsibility category based on role positioning. In the hierarchical system of higher education institutions, this responsibility is reflected in a series of key responsibilities such as decision-making, resource allocation, task supervision, etc., which are reasonably and orderly assigned to specific individuals or groups at different levels, such as the dean of the college, department heads, etc. These leaders, by virtue of the power given by their positions, perform the corresponding responsibilities and promote the realization and development of organizational goals.

2.2. Leadership Capability

As a highly comprehensive ability system, leadership capability is that leaders can integrate and use cognitive capital, emotional capital, social capital and cultural capital in a strategic way. Through this integrated application, leaders can effectively guide stakeholders to reach a consensus, so that their personal goals and organizational vision are highly aligned, and then promote the steady development of the organization in the established direction (Singh et al., 2024).

However, in the process of practical application of leadership, there is often a disconnection between theory and reality. The original complex and diverse leadership structure is often over simplified in the practical operation level, and even confused with the management and control mode in the bureaucratic rational system. This simplified practice path adheres to a limited and one-sided point of view. In the process of organization operation, order governance, program compliance and result accountability are given priority.

Specifically, the instruction governance emphasizes the absolute authority and one-way command of the superior over the subordinate, the program compliance focuses on the established process and norms, and the result accountability system focuses on the assessment and accountability of the final results. This management

control oriented practice mode may be able to achieve the stable operation and goals of the organization in the short term, but in the long run, it has inadvertently spawned the drawbacks of excessive management.

Over management makes the internal atmosphere of the organization tend to be rigid, and the autonomy and creativity of employees are seriously inhibited. Under the situation of marginalization of the concept of stimulating employees' internal motivation and encouraging innovation and breakthrough advocated by transformational leadership, organizations gradually fall into the dilemma of path dependence. This kind of path dependence not only fetters the existing structural framework of the organization, limits the ability of the organization to flexibly adjust and optimize according to changes in the external environment, but also seriously weakens the innovation vitality and adaptability of the organization.

Especially in the dynamic and complex environment of higher education, the external environment is changing with each passing day, the speed of knowledge updating is accelerating, and the social demand for higher education is increasingly diversified. In this context, the lack of innovation and adaptability caused by excessive management will make it difficult for higher education institutions to make an effective response quickly in the face of new challenges and opportunities, thus affecting their long-term development and the realization of social value.

2.3. Teacher Leadership

As an anti hegemonic leadership paradigm, teacher leadership (TL) breaks through the shackles of traditional hierarchical power positions and emphasizes the professional influence exerted through informal power paths. Its ideological origins can be traced back to the wave of educational reform in the United States in the 1950s, and have been continuously improved and deepened in subsequent school improvement movements. This paradigm reinterprets leadership as a distributed, practice based dynamic existence, in which educators, regardless of their formal rank, can become a key force driving educational change.

The operational logic of TL does not rely on the authority granted by the institution, but on the expert power derived from teaching proficiency, depth of disciplinary expertise, and collaborative effectiveness.

In the distributed, practice oriented leadership system redefined by TL, educators can play an active role as change agents. Specifically, as the cornerstone of TL's operational logic, expert power is generated by factors such as the level of mastery in teaching, the thickness of disciplinary expertise, and the effectiveness of collaboration, rather than the power granted by institutional authorization. TL is able to achieve this by constructing a permeable influence network characterized by reciprocity, co construction, and emerging legitimacy, which poses a strong challenge to the traditional top-down governance model. These networks are key to how TL shows its impact and defies traditional power structures.

3. The Multi-Dimensional Manifestations of Teacher Leadership

TL isn't just about classroom teaching or specific subjects. From a systems theory perspective, TL related element plays a diverse and critical role in the university system (Wang et al., 2025). At the level of strategic decision-making in colleges, it breaks down barriers between information and departments, promotes diverse communication and collaboration, injects innovative vitality into decision-making, and drives colleges to adapt to the environment and achieve change (Wang et al., 2024). Create an open and collaborative atmosphere among the teacher community, build a platform for communication and sharing, become a model of professional cooperation, and enhance the team's teaching and research level. For student development, it provides guidance in an infectious and inspiring manner, emphasizes value shaping, stimulates potential and social responsibility, and cultivates high-quality talents. In addition, it can sensitively integrate external resources, achieve a positive interaction between the college and the external environment, and enhance the comprehensive competitiveness of the college.

3.1. Professional Guiding Force

Professional guiding force includes professional foresight, professional development power, professional decision-making power, professional change power, and professional innovation power. This dimension underscores the pivotal role that teachers play in program development and academic innovation. It encompasses the following specific aspects: 1) Professional Foresight. To discern industry trends and technological shifts, an ability teachers must possess, shaping academic program directions with this insight. Programs stay relevant and aligned with job market needs evolving, ensured by their forward-thinking approach. 2) Professional Development Capacity. Adept teachers must master formulating, implementing program-building blueprints, and refining talent-nurturing strategies. Improvement and adaptation, ongoing and necessary, secure high-quality and efficient programs. 3) Professional Decision-Making Authority. Teachers should have a voice in establishing professional standards, developing curricula, and allocating resources. Their expertise and experience are invaluable in making informed decisions that benefit the entire academic community. 4) Professional Change-Driving Ability. In the field of teaching innovation, innovation in teaching methods, optimization of evaluation mechanisms, and reshaping of learning environments are key dimensions. In this process, the teacher community plays the role of the vanguard. They uphold a positive and enterprising attitude, are enthusiastic about educational reform, have the courage to break through the shackles of traditional teaching, actively explore and try innovative teaching strategies and methods. This innovative spirit and practice have carefully constructed a vibrant and attractive educational experience journey for students, effectively promoting their comprehensive development and growth.

Advanced academic credentials and copious professional know-how typify

university educators, endowing them with significant sway in their domains. They can guide high-quality program evolution and cultivate an innovative, excellent milieu by capitalizing on their proficiency via curriculum crafting, team shaping, and project blueprints.

3.2. Inspirational Power

Inspirational power refers to the subtle yet profound impact that teachers have on those around them through their personal charisma, unwavering professional commitment, and unimpeachable moral integrity (Granville-Chapman et al., 2024). It encompasses the following specific aspects: 1) Influence through Example. Inspirational teachers, leading through action, benchmark exemplary behavior. They're role models for peers and students alike. Setting a standard for exemplary conduct, they inspire by deeds, acting as models for both peers and students. Actions overpower words for these educators, inciting others to mirror their commitment and moral code. 2) Motivational Force. The singular capacity of these educators lies in sparking the latent drive among both teachers and students. They guide individuals to unearth their latent capabilities, spurring the setting of audacious aims and the pursuit of eminence. Personal and professional advancement is spurred by their bolstering and backing. 3) Guidance and Enlightenment. Teachers who inspire offer intellectual provocation, career mentorship, and values-grounded instruction. Guide students and colleagues toward purposeful trajectories, navigating academic and professional intricacies, endowing with purpose and direction.

In general, teachers with excellent motivational and leadership abilities can not only exert positive influence in classroom teaching scenarios, but also carefully cultivate a vibrant and educative "education ecosystem" in diverse educational contexts outside the classroom. During this process, teachers are able to develop a sharp and profound self-awareness of their profession, and establish a stable and positive sense of professional identity. The construction of this educational ecosystem has a significant promoting effect on the comprehensive development and sound personality shaping of students. Among them, the inspiring power demonstrated by teachers is actually a crucial soft skill. It can deeply infiltrate and enrich the cultural connotation of the organization, create a positive atmosphere for the organization, and become a key driving force for promoting collective success.

3.3. Communication and Cooperation Power

This ability demonstrates the excellent coordination, efficient negotiation, and deep collaboration skills that teachers possess when interacting with internal and external stakeholders.

Internally, teachers actively cultivate interdisciplinary and cross departmental teamwork models in their teaching and research practices. During this process, the free flow and deep sharing of knowledge and professional information have become significant features. By breaking down barriers between disciplines and

departments, teachers create an academic culture of shared learning and mutual support, effectively enriching the connotation and vitality of the academic community.

With such skills, teachers are able to build lasting and stable partnerships with diverse entities in external environments, including businesses, local communities, parent groups, government agencies, and various educational institutions both domestically and internationally. Teachers play a key role in introducing high-quality external resources by fully integrating their academic network, industry connections, and social capital. Their carefully constructed practical platform effectively bridged the gap between theory and practice, achieving organic integration and efficient utilization of industry, academia, research, and the real world. This measure not only broadens the educational perspective, but also significantly enhances students' practical skills and competitiveness in the job market.

In addition, external cooperation, as a valuable feedback mechanism, provides teachers with new teaching and research inspiration and innovative motivation. The coordination and collaboration skills of teachers have become the core driving force for promoting the continuous evolution and vigorous development of the education ecosystem.

4. Exerting Teacher Leadership Is an Inevitable Requirement for the Connotative Development of Eco-Vocational Colleges

Currently, ecological vocational college is facing two core development obstacles. Firstly, graduates lack competitiveness in the job market; Secondly, it fails to meet the requirements of social or professional certification standards. These two major obstacles are significantly correlated with the output efficiency of colleges, but at their root, they actually stem from systemic deficiencies in deep dimensions such as talent cultivation models, curriculum system design, faculty quality, and governance structure systems.

If ecological vocational college wants to achieve a sustainable solution to the above challenges, it must abandon its previous extensive growth strategy that focused on scale expansion, infrastructure investment, and short-term rapid expansion, and instead adopt a connotative development path that focuses on improving education quality, shaping institutional characteristics, and practical effectiveness orientation. The connotative development requires colleges to start from multiple dimensions such as optimizing internal structural layout, innovating management operation mechanisms, and stimulating endogenous development momentum, in order to achieve substantial leaps in educational quality and sustained improvement in organizational performance.

In the process of transforming the higher education ecosystem, TL, as a highly strategic resource, has been underestimated for a long time despite its powerful role. The effectiveness of TL in promoting inclusive development within the institution is a key factor determining the success or failure of change, and its core

lies in how to accurately identify, systematically cultivate, and efficiently utilize this scarce resource. By providing teachers with a clear development vision, profound professional knowledge support, and extensive space for influence, we can fully stimulate their leadership potential and unleash the comprehensive development potential of the ecological vocational college, laying a solid foundation for them to move towards a brighter and more sustainable future.

4.1. Disciplinary and Program Development Requires Relying on Teacher Leadership

Vocational colleges have established their core development elements in the construction of disciplinary and curriculum systems. These disciplines and courses not only provide framework support for the teaching planning of the colleges and inject power into the development of scientific research, but also become important carriers for them to fulfill their social service functions. The quality of education and academic reputation of a college fundamentally depend on the effectiveness and development level of its discipline and curriculum construction.

Each vocational college covers specific professional fields and niche markets, forming unique disciplinary characteristics; And each professional project relies on these fields to carry out systematic construction. As authoritative experts in the field of subjects, teachers bear the dual mission of teaching and research in different professional directions. They not only have a profound understanding of industry standards and basic teaching principles, but also continuously track the latest developments in the discipline, grasp the latest knowledge system and emerging trends.

To effectively implement the concepts of “industry demand-oriented curriculum development” and “classroom teaching positioning based on real-life situations”, vocational colleges need to fully stimulate teachers’ leadership potential and innovative vitality in key aspects such as curriculum planning, standard setting, content design, resource integration, and reform implementation. Through this approach, colleges can ensure that their curriculum system is updated in sync with industrial transformation, and that teaching content is closely aligned with professional standards and industry norms. This measure will significantly enhance the attractiveness of professional projects to student groups, adaptability to industry demands, and relevance to career scenarios, thereby enhancing the core competitiveness and social service efficiency of the institution.

4.2. Cultivating High-Quality Talent Requires Fully Utilizing Teachers’ Leadership

For any college, the cornerstone mission lies in individual education, and talent cultivation’s caliber is the crucial metric for evaluating its connotative development success. In the talent training system, with the help of the well-designed knowledge structure of specific courses, the thinking inspiration atmosphere created by the influential in-depth interaction between teachers and students, and

the practical ability training given by hands-on practice, teachers are placed in the core position, as the most dynamic and creative key force in the process of talent training.

Over the courses they teach, each teacher wields substantial authority on value orientation, content planning, methodological ways, and evaluation design. TL integration means respecting teachers' professional autonomy within curriculum design, pedagogical innovation, and academic assessment. It includes supporting their efforts to probe new teaching models like project-based, situational, and blended learning, while carefully carrying out the basic educational mission of "cultivating virtue and nurturing talent".

Specifically, in the field of vocational education, teachers shoulder the important mission of cultivating students' professional spirit, tempering process skills and stimulating innovative thinking. Its influence not only stems from its demonstration and guidance as an example, but also from the deep interaction with students. This kind of TL is presented vividly in the process of education, which plays an irreplaceable key role in shaping vocational education talents with comprehensive literacy, professional ability and moral quality.

4.3. Forming Excellent Faculty Teams Requires Fully Utilizing Teacher Leadership

Beyond the simple gathering of individual members, an excellent team of teachers can coalesce into a cohesive, collaborative, and constantly developing academic collective. In team building, TL plays a dual role as both a "bonding agent" and a "growth catalyst".

The project leader demonstrates outstanding leadership effectiveness and plays a core role as a strategic leader in the team's operational system. It strengthens the cohesion of collective will by building broad consensus, providing precise guidance for team actions through clear development paths, and scientifically allocating key resources based on strategic considerations, in order to promote the team to achieve collaborative progress and efficient development around established goals. At the same time, backbone teachers play an irreplaceable role as cultivators in the professional growth of young teachers through diversified paths such as demonstration teaching demonstrations, collaborative scientific research and development, and mentor type talent cultivation. This type of interactive mode effectively promotes the organic integration of knowledge sharing, experience inheritance, and creative collaboration, gradually forming a professional development culture characterized by an academic community.

When TL is fully unleashed and systematically cultivated at the organizational level, institutions will form a highly adaptable, continuously innovative, and structurally optimized faculty team. This dynamically developing group of teachers essentially constitutes a strategic human capital reserve, which provides core driving force and intellectual support for the long-term sustainable development of colleges through the continuous accumulation and efficiency transformation of

knowledge capital.

4.4. Improving Overall College Governance Requires Teachers to Exert Leadership

Modern professional entities present a wide range of organizational structures, diverse stakeholder compositions, and dynamic and complex external environmental characteristics. In this context, the traditional top-down hierarchical governance model, due to excessive reliance on administrative power allocation, is no longer able to effectively respond to the practical needs of organizational development and the urgent demand for improving governance efficiency. In order to promote the modernization and transformation of the governance system and the systematic improvement of governance capabilities, it is urgent to establish a structured participation mechanism for teacher groups at different levels of governance. By expanding their substantive participation in key governance processes such as strategic planning, decision-making consultation, and quality monitoring, the organic integration of diversified governance subjects and specialized governance methods can be achieved.

Immersed in daily teaching and research realities, teachers uniquely fathom institutional policy efficacy, system-embedded challenges, and faculty-student needs. Regular opinion-gathering channels, democratic consultations, and committee involvements enable TL to impact significantly strategic planning, policy shaping, resource allocation, quality appraisal, and key institutional governance areas.

This approach infuses scientific rigor and democratic principles into decision-making. Among teachers, it cultivates a stronger sense of belonging, responsibility, and ownership. “Top-down” guidance and “bottom-up” innovation blend harmoniously. A governance model that combines vitality, high responsiveness, and broad inclusiveness has been cultivated, which can effectively adapt to the complexity and diversity characteristics presented by modern vocational education (Bao, 2024).

5. Constructing a Management and Operational Mechanism Conducive to the Exertion of Teacher Leadership

Most of the management modes of ecological vocational and technical college colleges still adhere to the traditional bureaucratic system, showing the characteristics of vertical integration structure, tight walls between departments and excessive concentration of power. Under this mode, the supervision of instruction transmission and implementation is placed in a high priority. Although the system ensures the unity of decision-making instructions, it also derives a series of negative effects, such as sluggish decision-making process, constrained innovation power, and lack of vitality of grassroots organizations.

In the forefront of teaching and research practice, administrative power often crosses boundaries and improperly interferes with professional autonomy. The

cumbersome and complex bureaucratic procedures bind teachers like shackles, continuously consuming their valuable energy. Meanwhile, short-sighted and distorted evaluation and incentive mechanisms pose significant obstacles to the emergence and manifestation of TL. This transformation directly leads to the failure to fully unleash the creative potential of human resources in colleges, resulting in significant idle and ineffective talent resources.

Resolving this dilemma urgently requires a systematic restructuring of governance mechanisms, and organizational innovation has become the key path to breaking through current governance bottlenecks. The core lies in achieving a fundamental shift in management paradigm: from a “disciplinary” governance thinking based on hierarchical control, to a “developmental” governance paradigm characterized by teacher empowerment. This ideological reform essentially involves restructuring the power allocation mechanism, transforming teachers from passive recipients of administrative instructions to active designers and practitioners of educational change.

5.1. The Vertical Dimension of Mechanism Reconstruction: Opening Two-Way Channels, Activating Grassroots Wisdom

Vertically, with the current organizational framework’s fundamental stability maintained, establishing two-way communication and decision-making participation paths should be the focus shift, enabling both top-down and bottom-up fluxes.

A “decentralized decision-making” mechanism needs instituting. Specialized teaching and research departments and course teams should get more autonomy in crucial aspects like talent development, fund allocation, and faculty recruitment. This shifts the decision-making hub nearer to the information and action epicenter. “Leadership connecting with the grassroots” and “dean’s luncheons” initiatives should be carried out for direct, cross-hierarchical dialogue between college administrators and frontline educators. Such interactions offer leaders a platform to receive honest feedback, clarify policy aims, and better align with strategic goals.

Ensuring the smooth operation of the “upward feedback” mechanism is of paramount importance. Strengthening the construction of institutionalized participation platforms, such as employee representative conferences, academic committees, and professional development committees, is aimed at achieving this goal. With the help of digital technology tools, a periodic online suggestion collection and feedback system can be constructed, which is also essential for achieving the above goals. Through these channels, the insights and professional knowledge of grassroots teachers can quickly and authentically converge, thereby having a substantial impact on higher-level decision-making.

The ultimate goal is to make top-level strategic planning more pragmatic and grassroots innovation more purposeful, fostering a harmonious and mutually reinforcing dynamic at the vertical level.

5.2. The Horizontal Dimension of Mechanism Reconstruction: Promoting Open Collaboration, Breaking Organizational Barriers

Horizontally, there must be a steadfast commitment to dismantling departmental silos and disciplinary boundaries, fostering a networked, project-oriented collaborative ecosystem.

Instituting regular high-level joint conference systems is crucial for strategic coordination at the institutional level. Party affairs, administration, academia, student services, and other key sectors must align on major issues through these forums to achieve a unified and coherent approach.

Enhancing teaching and research cooperation across departments and disciplines is of paramount importance and should be actively promoted. Particularly in the context of major educational reforms, interdisciplinary curriculum development, and technological innovation platform construction, it is advisable to establish agile task teams.

Adopting a “project-based” management paradigm serves as a potent catalyst for resource sharing, fosters a collaborative culture, and facilitates the attainment of collective accomplishments. As underscored by Pardosi & Utari (2021), significant educational reform endeavors, interdisciplinary curriculum design, and technological innovation platform establishment constitute critical focal points.

Around these key areas, the formation of flexible task teams is instrumental in bolstering cross-departmental and interdisciplinary teaching and research collaboration. The “project-based” management approach not only acts as a driving force for resource sharing and collective achievement but also nurtures a cooperative and mutually beneficial culture. When effectively implemented, this approach yields substantial benefits for cross-departmental and interdisciplinary teaching and research activities.

For spontaneous teacher exchange, actively cultivating “informal platforms” is of utmost importance. Initiatives like teaching salons, academic workshops, and cross-disciplinary reading groups can foster an organizational climate that’s open, egalitarian, and intellectually stimulating. Through exchanges and debates, ideas flourished, meaningful interactions and cooperation were greatly strengthened. The vitality of these horizontal mechanisms is an important indicator of an organization’s health.

In the whole organizational network, teachers as key nodes play a bridge role between the management and students. If the initiative and leadership of teachers can be released, they will become the core lever to promote the reform of the whole institution (Zhan et al., 2023). The highest level of university management is to create a democratic, trust, empowering and fault-tolerant cultural atmosphere. This culture can motivate teachers to play a voluntary, conscious and proud leadership role in the framework of both safety and achievement. As a result, teachers have changed from “passive implementation” to “active action”, leading university education into a virtuous cycle of connotative development.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, for eco-vocational colleges facing challenges such as lack of competitiveness in the graduate employment market and inability to meet certification standards, it is imperative to shift from quantity expansion to connotation development. TL has become a key strategic asset in this transformation journey. It plays a multidimensional role, guiding the development of disciplines and projects, cultivating high-quality talents, forming an excellent faculty team, and improving overall university governance. However, traditional bureaucratic management hinders its effectiveness. To address this issue, it is necessary to rebuild management and operational mechanisms. Vertically, establish two-way channels and activate grassroots intelligence; Promote open collaboration horizontally and break down organizational barriers. By creating a culture of democracy, trust, and empowerment, ecological vocational colleges can fully unleash TL and promote their entry into a virtuous cycle of connotative development.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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