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Article

Distributed Pedagogical Leadership Structures in Driving Decision·Making Agility of School Leaders in a Higher Education Institution in China

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Abstract: This comprehensive study rigorously examined the intricate relationship between Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL) and Decision-Making Agility (DMA) among a diverse cohort of 232 faculty members at a prominent higher education institution in China. Utilizing a robust quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, empirical data were systematically collected through structured surveys assessing demographic profiles, prevailing leadership practices, and strategic decision-making capabilities. The gathered data were subsequently analyzed employing advanced statistical techniques, including means, standard deviations, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson correlation coefficients. The empirical results demonstrate that DPL is clearly and significantly present within the institution (overall mean = 2.84, SD = 0.37). Among its dimensions, Cultural Responsiveness ranked the highest (M = 2.98), whereas Knowledge Sharing was observed to be the lowest (M = 2.73). Concurrently, DMA is also highly evident among the faculty (overall mean = 2.76, SD = 0.19), with Learning Agility (M = 2.85) and Data-Driven Insight (M = 2.84) emerging as the strongest facets, while Emotional Regulation appeared as the weakest (M = 2.66). Furthermore, minimal demographic differences were found across the participant pool. Crucially, a moderate positive correlation was observed between DPL and DMA ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), strongly indicating that collaborative, culturally responsive, and knowledge-oriented leadership frameworks significantly enhance decision-making agility in educational settings. Based on these compelling findings, an Upskilling-Oriented Leadership Development Program is strategically proposed to systematically improve leadership inclusivity, optimize knowledge management processes, and foster emotional resilience among school leaders.

Keywords: pedagogical leadership; decision-making agility; learning agility; knowledge management; cultural responsiveness; teacher empowerment

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are increasingly navigating complex and rapidly evolving environments shaped by digital transformation, globalization, educational reforms, and shifting stakeholder expectations. In the context of China, these developments have heightened the need for leadership approaches that are both adaptive and collaborative, capable of addressing institutional and instructional challenges within traditionally hierarchical governance structures [1]. Such challenges demand innovative strategies to ensure that institutions remain responsive and effective in meeting the needs of diverse stakeholders while maintaining their academic and operational integrity.

Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL) has gained prominence as a transformative approach that prioritizes shared responsibility, collaborative decision-making, and professional learning among administrators and faculty members. By distributing leadership roles across various institutional actors, DPL aims to foster greater participation, drive instructional improvements, and enhance organizational responsiveness. Concurrently, Decision-Making Agility (DMA) has emerged as a vital

competency for educational leaders, encompassing the ability to make timely, informed, and flexible decisions in dynamic environments. This agility is achieved through a combination of learning adaptability, data-driven judgment, emotional regulation, and governance strategies that are responsive to changing circumstances [2,3].

Despite the increasing focus on distributed leadership and agile decision-making, empirical research exploring the interplay between Distributed Pedagogical Leadership and Decision-Making Agility within Chinese higher education remains scarce. This gap is particularly evident in teacher-education-oriented and non-elite institutions, which often operate under distinct constraints compared to research-intensive universities [4]. Existing studies predominantly concentrate on basic education or elite academic institutions, leaving a significant void in understanding how leadership distribution impacts agile decision-making in other contexts. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the influence of distributed pedagogical leadership structures on the decision-making agility of school leaders within a higher education institution in China, offering insights into how these frameworks can be optimized to meet institutional challenges effectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Distributed Pedagogical Leadership

Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL) refers to a leadership approach in which responsibilities for teaching, learning, and instructional improvement are shared among multiple actors within an educational institution rather than being concentrated in formal administrative positions. It conceptualizes leadership as a collective and relational practice embedded in everyday organizational activities, where administrators, faculty members, and academic teams jointly contribute to institutional development [1,5]. This approach fosters a dynamic environment where leadership is not confined to a single individual but is instead distributed across various roles and functions, enabling a more inclusive and participatory framework for institutional growth.

Compared with traditional hierarchical leadership, DPL emphasizes shared responsibility, collaboration, and participation in decision-making processes. Leadership is therefore not limited to positional authority but distributed across individuals and practices that shape instructional improvement and organizational learning. Its key dimensions include shared visioning, collaborative decision-making, professional learning facilitation, knowledge sharing, trust-building, systemic coherence, and cultural responsiveness. These elements collectively contribute to strengthening institutional capacity and instructional quality, fostering an environment where innovation and adaptability are prioritized to meet evolving educational demands.

The theoretical foundation of DPL is grounded in the concept of leadership as a practice distributed across leaders, followers, and situational contexts. This perspective highlights the importance of empowering educators and fostering professional collaboration to drive school improvement through shared leadership practices. By emphasizing the relational and situational aspects of leadership, DPL provides a framework for understanding how collective efforts can enhance institutional effectiveness and support the continuous development of teaching and learning processes.

In the context of Chinese higher education, DPL has gained increasing importance due to ongoing reforms that emphasize participation, innovation, and governance modernization. However, many institutions still operate under hierarchical structures that limit teacher involvement and restrict knowledge-sharing practices. This creates a gap between policy expectations and actual leadership practices, making the implementation of distributed leadership uneven and context-dependent [6,7]. Addressing these challenges requires a nuanced approach that considers the unique cultural and organizational dynamics within Chinese educational institutions, ensuring that reforms align with practical realities while fostering a more collaborative and inclusive leadership model.

2.2. Decision-Making Agility

Decision-Making Agility (DMA) refers to the ability of educational leaders to make timely, informed, and adaptive decisions in complex and rapidly changing institutional environments. In higher education settings, it reflects how leaders respond to uncertainty, integrate information, and adjust decisions in ways that maintain organizational effectiveness and instructional quality [8]. This concept underscores the necessity for leaders to navigate challenges with precision and adaptability, ensuring that institutional goals are met even in the face of unpredictable circumstances.

DMA is characterized by several key dimensions, including learning agility, data-driven insight, teacher empowerment, knowledge management, emotional regulation, and governance structures [9]. Learning agility enables leaders to acquire new knowledge and adapt to unfamiliar situations, fostering resilience in dynamic environments. Data-driven insight emphasizes the importance of utilizing empirical evidence and institutional data to guide decision-making processes. Teacher empowerment highlights the value of involving faculty in governance processes, thereby promoting a collaborative and inclusive approach. Knowledge management focuses on the effective organization and dissemination of institutional knowledge, ensuring that critical information is accessible and actionable. Emotional regulation supports stability and composure in decision-making under pressure, enabling leaders to maintain clarity and focus. Governance structures provide the institutional framework necessary for coordinated and responsive actions, ensuring that decisions align with organizational priorities and stakeholder needs.

The importance of decision-making agility has increased significantly in the context of educational transformation, digitalization, and policy reform. In higher education institutions, leaders are expected to respond quickly to evolving academic demands, technological advancements, and stakeholder expectations. However, traditional decision-making systems in many contexts remain hierarchical and procedure-driven, which may limit responsiveness and flexibility [10]. This rigidity can hinder the ability of institutions to adapt to rapid changes, making the enhancement of decision-making agility a critical focus for contemporary educational leadership. By fostering a culture of adaptability and innovation, institutions can better position themselves to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

2.3. Theoretical Foundations

This study is grounded in four complementary theoretical perspectives that collectively explain the relationship between Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL) and Decision-Making Agility (DMA) in educational institutions. Distributed Leadership Theory conceptualizes leadership as a practice distributed across leaders, followers, and situational contexts, emphasizing that leadership emerges through interactions rather than residing in a single formal position [11]. Distributed leadership strengthens collaboration, teacher empowerment, and professional learning, thereby enhancing organizational capacity and shared responsibility within schools.

From a broader systemic perspective, Complexity Leadership Theory frames educational institutions as complex adaptive systems in which leadership emerges through dynamic interactions and continuous adaptation [12,13]. This view is complemented by the Creative Problem-Solving Model, which explains decision-making effectiveness through cognitive processes such as problem identification, information encoding, idea generation, and solution evaluation. It emphasizes cognitive flexibility and knowledge integration as essential elements of adaptive decision-making, which are critical for navigating the challenges of dynamic educational environments.

Together, these theories provide an integrated framework for this study, suggesting that distributed leadership practices enhance decision-making agility by promoting collaboration, cognitive adaptability, and responsive leadership processes within complex educational environments. By fostering a culture of shared responsibility and adaptive thinking, these practices enable institutions to respond effectively to evolving challenges and opportunities, ensuring sustained organizational growth and innovation.

2.4. Empirical Studies

A growing body of empirical research has examined distributed leadership and decision-making processes in educational settings, with consistent evidence suggesting that distributed leadership contributes positively to teacher development, organizational performance, and institutional effectiveness [14]. Studies have demonstrated that distributed leadership enhances teacher professional learning, job satisfaction, and instructional innovation by fostering collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility within schools. This approach has been shown to empower teachers, enabling them to take greater ownership of their roles and responsibilities, which in turn promotes a culture of continuous improvement. Additionally, distributed leadership has been linked to increased teacher agency and collective efficacy, both of which are critical for improving instructional quality and achieving better student outcomes.

Empirical findings further indicate that distributed leadership is positively associated with organizational innovation and adaptability [14, 15]. Schools that implement stronger distributed leadership practices tend to exhibit higher levels of both exploratory and exploitative innovation, suggesting that shared leadership structures facilitate incremental improvements as well as systemic transformations. Moreover, distributed leadership has been found to improve communication flows and strengthen professional collaboration among educators, which collectively enhances overall school effectiveness. These findings underscore the importance of fostering an environment where leadership responsibilities are shared, as this can lead to more dynamic and responsive educational institutions.

Research on decision-making in educational contexts highlights the significance of data use, emotional regulation, and collaborative governance in enhancing leadership effectiveness. Evidence suggests that data-driven decision-making improves institutional performance by ensuring that leadership choices are grounded in empirical evidence rather than intuition or anecdotal observations. Emotional regulation has also emerged as a critical factor in maintaining effective leadership, particularly in high-pressure or crisis situations where clear and composed decision-making is essential [16]. Furthermore, recent studies emphasize that leadership agility, characterized by the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances, contributes significantly to organizational resilience and responsiveness in dynamic environments.

Despite the extensive research on distributed leadership and decision-making processes, there remains a notable gap in understanding their interplay, particularly within the context of Chinese higher education. Existing studies have predominantly focused on basic education or elite universities, leaving limited empirical evidence on how distributed pedagogical leadership influences decision-making agility in teacher-education-oriented institutions. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into how these two constructs interact in underexplored institutional settings. Such research could provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities associated with implementing distributed leadership in diverse educational contexts, thereby contributing to the development of more effective leadership models tailored to specific institutional needs [5,17].

2.5. Research Gap

Although existing literature has extensively examined distributed leadership and decision-making processes in education, several important gaps remain. Most studies on distributed leadership tend to focus on outcomes such as teacher job satisfaction, professional learning, or instructional improvement. However, less attention has been devoted to exploring its relationship with leadership agility or decision-making flexibility, which are critical for navigating complex educational environments. Similarly, research on decision-making agility has predominantly been situated in business or general organizational contexts, with limited application to higher education leadership [18]. This is particularly evident when considering the integration of dimensions such as learning agility, data-driven insight, emotional regulation, and governance responsiveness within

educational settings. These dimensions are essential for fostering adaptive and effective leadership practices in dynamic institutional contexts, yet they remain underexplored in the academic discourse on higher education leadership frameworks.

In addition, empirical studies in the Chinese higher education context remain concentrated in elite or research-intensive universities, leaving teacher-education-oriented and non-elite institutions underexplored. These institutions often face distinct governance structures and leadership challenges that warrant closer examination. Furthermore, existing research rarely examines Distributed Pedagogical Leadership and Decision-Making Agility as an integrated framework [19]. Instead, leadership practices and decision-making capabilities are frequently treated as separate constructs, leading to a fragmented understanding of their interplay. This fragmentation limits the ability to comprehend how distributed leadership structures collectively influence adaptive decision-making in real institutional contexts. Addressing these gaps, this study investigates the relationship between Distributed Pedagogical Leadership and Decision-Making Agility in a Chinese higher education institution. By doing so, it provides empirical evidence on how distributed leadership structures contribute to more adaptive and responsive decision-making processes, offering valuable insights into the governance and operational dynamics of diverse educational institutions.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design to examine the relationship between Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL) and Decision-Making Agility (DMA) among faculty in a Chinese higher education institution. The research was conducted at a public, full-time university specializing in early childhood and arts education, with a total of 350 full-time faculty and approximately 4,000 students. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting faculty with teaching responsibilities. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed, of which 232 were returned and deemed valid, yielding a response rate of 92.8%. The study focused on faculty perceptions of DPL and their evaluation of leadership agility to assess both current practice and its potential impact on adaptive decision-making.

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire comprising three sections: demographic information, a 56-item Distributed Pedagogical Leadership scale, and a 48-item Decision-Making Agility scale, each rated on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated through expert review and a pilot test, yielding high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.80$). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participant characteristics and mean scores, one-way ANOVA to examine group differences based on demographics, and Pearson correlation analysis to explore relationships between DPL and DMA. Ethical considerations included approval from the university ethics committee, informed consent from participants, and assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. The methodological approach ensured a systematic examination of the variables, enabling identification of key factors that support adaptive and collaborative leadership in the context of Chinese higher education. Additionally, the structured design of the questionnaire facilitated precise measurement of faculty perceptions, while the statistical methods employed provided robust insights into the dynamics of leadership and decision-making agility within the institution [16].

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Profile

The survey encompassed 232 faculty members, showcasing a diverse spectrum of teaching experience, academic ranks, educational qualifications, and age groups. Table 1 illustrates that the majority of respondents were early- to mid-career educators, with 28.9% having 0–3 years and 27.6% possessing 4–7 years of teaching experience. Academic ranks were predominantly Lecturer (33.6%) and Assistant Professor (29.7%), while educational qualifications were primarily Master's degrees (43.1%), followed by Bachelor's degrees

(36.2%) and Doctoral degrees (20.7%). The age distribution was concentrated in the 30–39 year-old range (37.5%), reflecting a generally youthful faculty demographic. This composition highlights the institution's focus on nurturing emerging academic talent and suggests potential implications for institutional dynamics, such as adaptability and innovation in pedagogical practices [19]. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of these demographic characteristics, offering valuable context for subsequent analyses.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Indicators	Category	Frequency (f)	(%) Percentage
Years in Service	0–3 years	67	28.9
	4–7 years	64	27.6
	8–12 years	50	21.6
	13 years and above	51	22
Academic Rank	Instructor	78	33.6
	Assistant Professor	69	29.7
	Associate Professor	45	19.4
	Professor	40	17.2
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	84	36.2
	Master's Degree	100	43.1
	Doctoral Degree	48	20.7
Age	20–29 years old	58	25
	30–39 years old	87	37.5
	40–49 years old	49	21.1
	50 years old and above	38	16.4

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals a relatively young and mid-level faculty cohort, which may significantly shape their perspectives on leadership and decision-making within the institution. The predominance of early-career educators and mid-level academic ranks suggests a workforce that is likely to be adaptable and open to innovative practices. Furthermore, the concentration of faculty members in the 30–39-year-old age range aligns with a phase of professional growth and development, potentially fostering dynamic contributions to institutional strategies. These characteristics serve as a foundational context for exploring Distributed Pedagogical Leadership and Decision-Making Agility, as outlined in the subsequent sections [20]. Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of these demographic trends, underscoring their relevance to the study's analytical framework.

4.2. Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL)

The overall mean score for Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL) among the respondents was 2.84 (SD = 0.37), indicating that distributed leadership practices are clearly present within the institution. Among the seven dimensions of DPL, Cultural Responsiveness received the highest rating (M = 2.98), reflecting the institution's strong emphasis on fostering cultural inclusivity and adapting to diverse teaching contexts. Collaborative Decision-Making and Professional Learning Facilitation were rated equally high (both M = 2.89), suggesting that educators perceive active involvement in decision-making processes and access to professional development opportunities as well-established practices. Systemic Coherence (M = 2.88) and Trust-Building (M = 2.79) also scored above the overall mean, indicating effective coordination across organizational units and moderate levels of interpersonal trust among faculty members. In contrast, Knowledge Sharing received the lowest mean score (M = 2.73), highlighting that institutional mechanisms for systematic knowledge exchange remain relatively underdeveloped [21]. Shared Visioning was slightly below the overall mean (M = 2.76), suggesting that while a common institutional vision exists, its implementation may not

fully engage all faculty members. These findings underscore both the strengths and areas for improvement in the institution's distributed leadership practices, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary Assessment of Distributed Pedagogical Leadership Structures

Dimension	Weighted Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Shared Visioning	2.76	0.88	Evident	6
Collaborative Decision·Making	2.89	0.69	Evident	2.5
Professional Learning Facilitation	2.89	0.53	Evident	2.5
Knowledge Sharing	2.73	0.75	Evident	7
Trust·Building	2.79	0.38	Evident	5
Systemic Coherence	2.88	0.46	Evident	4
Cultural Responsiveness	2.98	0.42	Evident	1
Overall Mean	2.84	0.37	Evident	

4.3. Decision-Making Agility (DMA)

The overall mean score for Decision-Making Agility (DMA) among respondents was 2.76 (SD = 0.19), indicating that leaders' decision-making capabilities are evident within the institution. Among the six dimensions of DMA, Learning Agility achieved the highest mean score (M = 2.85), closely followed by Data-Driven Insight (M = 2.84). This suggests that leaders are generally proficient in acquiring new knowledge and leveraging data to make informed decisions. Governance Structure also performed well, with a mean score of 2.83, reflecting reasonably well-established decision-making frameworks. However, Emotional Regulation received the lowest mean score (M = 2.66), highlighting potential challenges for leaders in managing emotions effectively during high-pressure or high-stakes situations. Knowledge Management and Teacher Empowerment both scored 2.70, indicating a need for more systematic approaches to knowledge sharing and greater faculty involvement in decision-making processes. These findings underscore that while the institution demonstrates solid overall decision-making agility, targeted improvements in emotional regulation, knowledge management, and teacher empowerment could further enhance leaders' adaptability and responsiveness (see Table 3).

Table 3. Summary Assessment of Decision·Making Agility

Dimension	Weighted Mean	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Learning Agility	2.85	0.37	Evident	1
Data·Driven Insight	2.84	0.37	Evident	2
Governance Structures	2.83	0.33	Evident	3
Teacher Empowerment	2.7	0.41	Evident	4.5
Knowledge Management	2.7	0.42	Evident	4.5
Emotional Regulation	2.66	0.44	Evident	6
Overall Mean	2.76	0.19	Evident	

4.4. Anova Results

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether demographic variables, including teaching experience, academic rank, educational background, and age, influenced faculty evaluations of Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL) and Decision-Making Agility (DMA). The results indicated that most demographic factors did not significantly affect the assessments. However, specific dimensions of DPL exhibited notable group differences. For instance, Shared Visioning varied significantly by academic rank ($p = 0.018$), with Assistant Professors assigning higher ratings compared to

Professors [22]. Additionally, Professional Learning Facilitation ($p = 0.019$) and Cultural Responsiveness ($p = 0.041$) differed based on educational attainment, with faculty holding Doctoral degrees providing higher evaluations. These findings suggest that while certain aspects of distributed leadership are perceived differently by subgroups, the overall consistency across other dimensions highlights a shared understanding of leadership practices within the institution. This nuanced variation underscores the importance of considering demographic diversity when analyzing leadership perceptions in academic settings.

For Decision-Making Agility (DMA), the ANOVA results demonstrated no significant differences across any demographic variable, including teaching experience, academic rank, educational background, or age. This uniformity suggests that faculty perceptions of decision-making agility remain consistent regardless of individual demographic characteristics. The stability in these evaluations highlights a broadly shared perspective on the institution's agility in decision-making processes. While certain leadership practices, such as those within Distributed Pedagogical Leadership (DPL), may exhibit subgroup-specific variations, the absence of such differences in DMA assessments points to a cohesive institutional culture in this domain. These findings emphasize the potential for fostering inclusive and universally accepted decision-making frameworks that resonate across diverse faculty demographics, further supporting the institution's strategic goals for leadership and operational effectiveness.

4.5. Correlation Results

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between DPL and DMA (see Table 4). The results revealed a moderate positive correlation between overall DPL and overall DMA ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that higher levels of distributed pedagogical leadership are associated with greater decision-making agility among school leaders. Among the specific dimensions, Knowledge Sharing demonstrated the strongest correlation with Knowledge Management ($r = 0.39$), highlighting the importance of effective information exchange in fostering robust management practices. Collaborative Decision-Making was significantly related to Governance Structure ($r = 0.25$), indicating that participatory approaches can enhance organizational frameworks. Interestingly, Shared Visioning exhibited a weak negative correlation with Learning Agility ($r = -0.13$), implying that a highly unified vision might slightly constrain rapid adaptability. These findings provide valuable insights into how distributed leadership practices can meaningfully enhance agile decision-making within higher education contexts, as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation Between DPL and DMA

Construct	Computed r	Sig.	Interpretation
Overall DPL × Overall DMA	0.47**	0	Significant moderate positive correlation

5. Recommendations and Leadership Development

The study identified several gaps in current leadership practices, including insufficient knowledge sharing, weak emotional regulation, limited teacher empowerment, and less transparent governance processes. To address these issues, a leadership development program is proposed to enhance distributed pedagogical leadership and decision-making agility. This program aims to systematically address these challenges by fostering a more collaborative and adaptive leadership framework within educational institutions.

Specifically, the program focuses on the following measures to ensure a comprehensive approach to leadership development and institutional improvement [23].

1. Institutionalize structured knowledge sharing systems through digital repositories, regular seminars, and cross-department platforms. These initiatives are designed to

promote collaboration, professional exchange, and the seamless dissemination of best practices across various organizational levels.

2. Integrate emotional intelligence and stress management into leadership training. This includes mindfulness courses, coaching sessions, and peer-feedback mechanisms, which collectively aim to enhance leaders' ability to manage stress and foster a supportive work environment.
3. Expand teacher empowerment by involving faculty at all levels in decision-making and policy processes. This measure also includes providing opportunities for mentorship and leadership development to ensure that teachers are actively engaged and supported in their professional growth.
4. Strengthen data-driven governance by implementing institutional dashboards, offering data literacy training, and promoting evidence-based decision-making practices. These steps aim to enhance transparency and accountability in governance processes.
5. Broaden shared visioning across all ranks through workshops, strategic retreats, and participatory planning processes. These activities are intended to align organizational goals and foster a sense of collective purpose among all stakeholders.
6. Implement the proposed Upskilling-Oriented Leadership Development Program over one academic year with a budget of approximately CNY 120,000. This initiative will be coordinated by the Office of the President, Academic Affairs, Human Resources, Quality Assurance, and IT departments to ensure its effective execution and alignment with institutional priorities.

Together, these measures aim to foster a collaborative, agile, and inclusive leadership culture. By addressing the specific gaps identified in distributed pedagogical leadership and decision-making agility, the program seeks to create a more resilient and forward-thinking educational environment [23].

6. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between distributed pedagogical leadership (DPL) structures and decision-making agility (DMA) among school leaders in a higher education institution. The findings reveal that DPL practices are clearly present, with Cultural Responsiveness scoring the highest and Knowledge Sharing the lowest among the seven dimensions assessed. Decision-making agility is also evident, particularly in Learning Agility and Data-Driven Insight, while Emotional Regulation remains a relative weakness that warrants further attention. Demographic variables, such as teaching experience, academic rank, and educational background, generally did not produce significant differences in the perception of DPL or DMA, except for a few dimensions like Shared Visioning and Professional Learning Facilitation, which showed minor variations. Correlation analysis confirms a moderate positive relationship between DPL and DMA, emphasizing the critical role of collaborative leadership, cultural responsiveness, and knowledge-oriented practices in enhancing leadership flexibility and responsiveness. These results suggest that fostering distributed leadership structures can significantly contribute to improving organizational adaptability and decision-making efficiency, particularly in dynamic and complex educational environments.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of distributed leadership in fostering adaptive governance, shared responsibility, and organizational agility in higher education institutions. Key implications include the need for institutionalized knowledge sharing mechanisms, integration of emotional intelligence into leadership training programs, empowerment of educators in decision-making processes, and the adoption of data-driven governance strategies to enhance institutional responsiveness. These findings provide a foundation for the proposed Upskilling-Oriented Leadership Development Program, which aims to strengthen school leaders' inclusivity, knowledge management capacity, and emotional resilience. By addressing these areas, the program seeks to promote sustainable improvement in institutional decision-making agility, ensuring that leaders are better equipped to navigate challenges and drive innovation. Future research

could explore the longitudinal impact of such leadership development initiatives, investigate the role of emerging technologies in facilitating distributed leadership, and examine cross-cultural variations in DPL and DMA practices to provide a more comprehensive understanding of their global applicability.

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