

Transformational Leadership Approaches to Improve School Management Efficiency in Junior High Schools, Henan, China

Haopeng Wu^{1*}, Waraporn Thaima², and Sirinthorn Sinjindawong³

Faculty of Educational Administration, Sripatum University Thailand

**Corresponding Author.* E-mail: wuhaopeng9328@gmail.com^{1*}

waraporn.th@spu.ac.th², sirinthorn.si@spu.ac.th³

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Abstract

This study explores transformational leadership in junior high schools in Henan, China, aiming to enhance school management efficiency. This mixed-method research aimed to (1) study the transformational leadership of school administrators and school management efficiency in junior high schools in Dengfeng, Henan, China; (2) develop transformational leadership approaches for improving school management efficiency; and (3) evaluate these approaches to enhance school management efficiency. The research was conducted in three phases: Phase 1 involved investigating the transformational leadership of junior high school administrators and school management efficiency through quantitative surveys. Phase 2 focused on developing transformational leadership methods for school administrators to improve school management efficiency, using qualitative data from in-depth interviews. Phase 3 entailed evaluating the effectiveness of these transformational leadership methods through expert evaluations and feedback. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, involving a questionnaire survey of 190 school administrators and in-depth interviews with 10 principals. Additionally, the developed approaches were evaluated by a focus group of nine educational management experts.

The study found that: (1) In the context of transformational leadership, principals excelled in idealized influence and inspirational motivation, but there is room for improvement in intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. In terms of school management efficiency, schools performed well in academic outcomes and resource allocation, but administrative processes showed variability and required enhancement. (2) A series of transformational leadership approaches were developed to enhance school management efficiency, including ethical workshops, transparent

decision-making, vision sharing, innovation labs, and personalized support. (3) The expert evaluation process validated these approaches, suggesting improvements such as incorporating interactive elements and multimedia tools and enhancing personalized support for staff. In conclusion, this study identifies feasible transformational leadership approaches to develop school management efficiency and fills a research gap in Henan Province, China.

Keywords: transformational leadership; school management efficiency; junior high schools; leadership approaches; expert evaluation

Introduction

Transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in educational management, where its unique ability to inspire and drive change makes it central to the discipline. As described by Smith & Jones (2018) and Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leaders not only set goals but also mobilize and empower educators to achieve higher educational objectives, creating an atmosphere of high involvement and commitment. Research by Kareem et al. (2021) and Leithwood (2021) highlights that transformational leadership is crucial in enhancing administrative effectiveness and strategic resource allocation, significantly affecting teacher morale and student engagement. Moreover, studies by Geijsel et al. (2003) and Leithwood et al. (1999) have confirmed the effectiveness of transformational leadership in shaping a positive educational environment, providing individual support, and offering intellectual stimulation. This leadership style enhances student academic achievements and fosters teacher professional development, improving the overall school atmosphere. In terms of school management efficiency, effective resource allocation, efficient administrative processes, and excellent academic outcomes are key. Studies by Li et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of optimizing management processes to improve educational outcomes, advocating for the simplification of administrative procedures to enhance the quality and efficiency of educational services.

Although the advantages of transformational leadership are widely recognized globally, Jia, J. W. (2020) highlights a significant research gap in its effective application within the educational practices of Henan Province. Additionally, Ma Li (2020) observes that while transformational leadership theory has emerged as a new paradigm in leadership research in Western countries, empirical studies in China remain rare, especially those focusing on the use of transformational leadership approaches by school administrators to improve school management efficiency. This study

aims to explore the transformational leadership approaches employed by school administrators in Dengfeng City, Henan Province, and their contributions to enhancing school management efficiency.

This study is set in Dengfeng City, Henan Province, China, a region known for its profound historical and cultural significance. As the second most populous province in China, Henan plays a critical role in agriculture and industry, contributing significantly to the nation's development. Dengfeng, historically known as Yangcheng, is renowned for its spiritual heritage, including the Shaolin Temple, making it an important center for education and culture. The educational system in Henan aligns with China's national focus on educational development and reform, aiming for balanced progress between urban and rural areas. Dengfeng's educational sector, with 49 junior high schools serving over 69,000 students, blends its rich historical legacy with modern educational practices, particularly incorporating the Buddhist culture and educational system of the Shaolin Monastery. (Government of Henan Province, China, 2024.)

Transformational leadership approaches are crucial for improving school management efficiency. These methods include establishing a common vision, promoting team collaboration, and encouraging innovation, all of which are key factors in enhancing school management efficiency and educational quality. Posuwanwattananun et al. (2023) found through in-depth interviews with administrators of three educational institutions in Thailand that establishing a common vision, promoting team collaboration, and conducting evaluations and feedback are essential for improving administrative efficiency. Similarly, Emmanuel (2020) analyzed the influence of transformational leadership style and principals' decision-making on high school teachers' organizational commitment in Jakarta laboratory schools, finding that this leadership style significantly enhances organizational commitment and can improve overall school performance. Additionally, Suksaen et al. (2021) evaluated the development of digital leadership among school administrators in Thailand, highlighting the importance of a digital vision and strategy, which align closely with the principles of transformational leadership, in fostering an innovative and efficient school environment. These studies collectively underscore the pivotal role of transformational leadership approaches in driving educational success and improving school management practices.

This study explores the approaches of transformational leadership to enhance educational management efficiency in Henan Province, China. Focusing on school administrators in Dengfeng City, it seeks to bridge the gap in understanding the practical application of these leadership strategies. By incorporating expert evaluations, this research offers insights that could significantly

improve educational outcomes and management practices, providing valuable guidance for school managers to address contemporary educational challenges.

Research Objective

1. To study transformational leadership of school administrators and school management efficiency in junior high schools, Dengfeng, Henan, China.
2. To develop transformational leadership approaches of school administrators for improving school management efficiency in junior high schools in Dengfeng, Henan, China.
3. To evaluate transformational leadership approaches of school administrators to improve school management efficiency in junior high schools, Dengfeng, Henan, China.

Literature Reviews

Transformational Leadership Transformational leadership is a leadership style designed to inspire and motivate team members to achieve positive changes within an organization. This style of leadership typically includes four main dimensions: (1) Idealized Influence, (2) Inspirational Motivation, (3) Intellectual Stimulation, (4) Individualized Consideration (Wikipedia, 2021). Each dimension significantly impacts organizations and individuals, promoting team morale, innovation, problem-solving, and employee growth.

Idealized influence is a critical component of transformational leadership, where leaders set an example for their teams through their conduct. Research shows that by demonstrating noble moral qualities and firm beliefs, leaders can earn respect and trust from followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This influence involves role modeling, ethical foundations, and trust-building. For instance, Weaver, Treviño, & Agle (2005) have noted that a leader's ethical behavior is essential for establishing a moral foundation. Inspirational motivation concerns how leaders can inspire team members through an attractive vision. This includes the presentation of visionary foresight, the setting of clear and challenging goals, and appropriate positive reinforcement measures (Kopperud et al., 2014; Locke & Latham, 2019; Ernst et al., 2021). Through these strategies, leaders can enhance followers' motivation and engagement, thereby improving the overall team performance.

Intellectual Stimulation emphasizes a leader's role in encouraging followers to think innovatively and solve problems. Reed (2023) discusses how leaders can foster innovation by providing support and resources, while EDIS (2020) describes the leader's role in addressing

complex problems and offering challenging tasks to enhance decision-making capabilities. Additionally, fostering continuous learning, as emphasized by McKinsey (2019), allows organizations and individuals to develop intellectually. Lastly, Individualized Consideration focuses on how leaders attend to the personal needs and development of each follower. This includes providing personalized attention, mentoring and coaching, and empathetic listening (Allen, 2016; Bass, 1985). Through these practices, leaders build trust and understanding, enhancing team members' satisfaction and loyalty.

School Management Efficiency School management efficiency encompasses crucial elements that drive the effective and economical operation of educational institutions. This efficiency can be articulated through three main dimensions: (1) Resource Allocation, (2) Administrative Processes, and (3) Academic Outcomes.

Resource allocation is a foundational aspect of school management efficiency. As delineated in the "Global Report of energy efficiency-2021", efficient resource allocation means achieving maximum output with the least resources, a principle that applies equally to the educational sector. This report underscores the importance of utilizing principles such as cost-benefit analysis, priority setting, goal alignment, and competitiveness enhancement to optimize resource distribution among various educational initiatives and departments.

Administrative processes in school settings refer to the structured activities and procedures that facilitate the smooth running of an institution. Weaver, G. R. et al. (2005) highlight the importance of clear, regulated administrative procedures and processes that ensure rights protection and fulfillment of obligations between administrative bodies and stakeholders. Emphasizing transparency, quality, knowledge, and supervision, these processes are crucial for decision-making and service provision within schools. Academic Outcomes are directly influenced by the efficiency of resource allocation and the effectiveness of administrative processes. Studies such as those by Wang et al. (2019) indicate that well-managed resources and streamlined administrative processes contribute significantly to improved academic performance by optimizing the educational environment and enhancing student satisfaction and educational outcomes.

Transformational Leadership Approaches for Improving School Management Efficiency Posuwanwattananun et al. (2023) investigated the guidelines for improving the effectiveness of educational institution administration using the transformational leadership of administrators in Thailand. The study employed qualitative research methods, conducting in-depth

interviews with administrators from three educational institutions. The findings highlighted five key aspects to enhance administrative effectiveness: establishing a common vision, promoting team collaboration, encouraging innovation and change, providing support and motivation, and conducting evaluations and feedback. The study also found these guidelines were well received by both administrators and teachers during the implementation process and had a positive impact on the effectiveness of educational institution administration and educational quality.

Şule and Semiha (2022) conducted an in-depth study on the relationship between transformational leadership approaches and the innovation management competence of school administrators. They particularly focused on the mediating role of positive psychological capital in this relationship. The study included teachers from primary and secondary schools in the Bayraklı and Karsiyaka districts of İzmir, Turkey. Using various scales, such as the Principal Leadership Style Scale, School Innovation Management Scale, and Positive Psychological Capital Scale, they successfully gathered relevant data. The structural equation modeling results revealed that positive psychological capital plays a mediating role between transformational leadership and innovation management, offering valuable insights for school administrators.

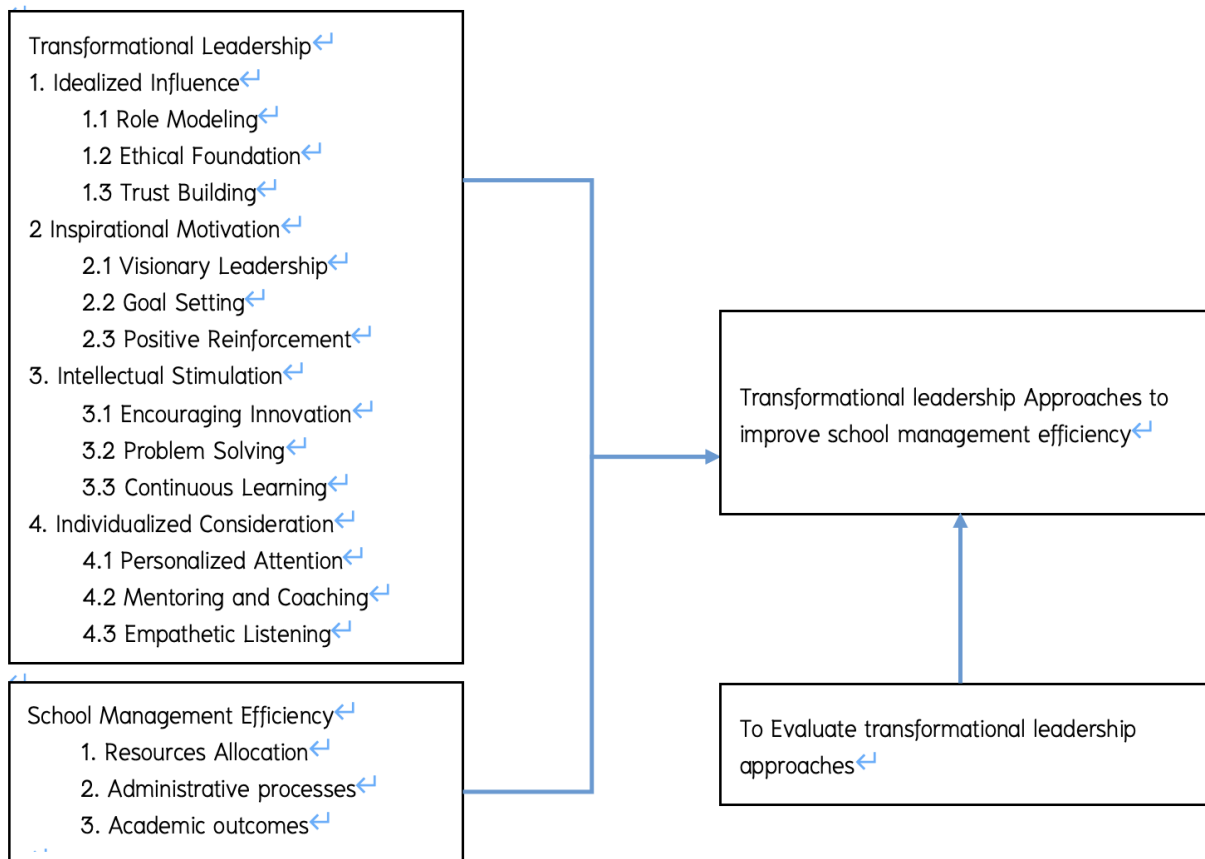
The research indicates that implementing effective transformational leadership approaches can significantly enhance school management efficiency. For example, Shanaz (2021) delved into the theoretical foundations of the field of educational management and leadership in her research. She noted that while there is a consensus on the need for successful leaders, there is much less confidence in which leadership practices are more likely to deliver the desired outcomes. She analyzed various leadership models and addressed the evidence of their relative effects in creating productive schools, offering valuable guidance for school administrators.

Research Gaps Despite the extensive research on transformational leadership and school management efficiency, there are still significant gaps. Existing literature primarily focuses on studies conducted in Western countries, with relatively few studies exploring transformational leadership in the educational context of China, particularly in Henan Province. For example, Jia, J. W. (2020) points out that although transformational leadership is widely applied globally, its application in Henan Province's educational practices remains underexplored.

Moreover, Ma Li (2020) points out that transformational leadership theory has become a new paradigm in Western leadership research, but there are few empirical studies in this field domestically. Ma Li's study also indicates that there are few in-depth discussions using principals' transformational leadership behaviors as explanatory variables. Additionally, most existing studies

focus on the impact of transformational leadership on teachers and students, with limited research on how transformational leadership specifically improves school management efficiency. Much of the literature centers on theoretical discussions and overall effect evaluations, lacking detailed analysis and empirical research on specific practices and dimensions such as resource allocation, administrative processes, and academic outcomes. Therefore, there is a lack of in-depth research on the specific mechanisms and practical effects of transformational leadership in improving school management efficiency, especially in the educational context of Henan Province, China. This knowledge gap limits our comprehensive understanding of the application and effectiveness of transformational leadership across different cultural and regional settings.

In conclusion, this research aims to explore how transformational leadership practices by junior high school principals in Dengfeng, Henan Province, enhance school management efficiency. It focuses on the practical applications and outcomes of leadership dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—in improving resource allocation, administrative processes, and academic results. This study will contribute concrete insights and empirical evidence on optimizing educational management within China's unique cultural and regional context. From the literature review, the conceptual framework can be drawn as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-method approach to research the transformational leadership and school management efficiency of junior high school principals in Dengfeng, Henan Province, China. Through structured interviews with school administrators and evaluations by experts in the field of educational management, it aims to develop leadership approaches that enhance management efficiency.

Phase 1: Quantitative Research

The research includes a quantitative survey of 363 administrators from 49 junior high schools in Dengfeng, with a sample size of 190 determined by Taro Yamane's formula. Data is collected via electronic questionnaires, primarily measuring the administrators' transformational leadership and school management efficiency.

The quantitative analysis utilizes means and standard deviations to analyze and rank the data. Initially, an overall analysis is conducted, integrating the performance across all dimensions.

Subsequently, a detailed analysis of each item within every dimension is performed. This approach ensures a comprehensive interpretation of the data, delving from the general to the specific and revealing the nuances and differences in transformational leadership and school management efficiency in various aspects.

The questionnaires were pre-tested to ensure their reliability and validity, covering both transformational leadership and school management efficiency. Pre-test results indicate that both the Transformational Leadership and School Management Efficiency questionnaires exhibit good reliability and validity. All items received an IOC rating of +1, demonstrating high congruence with research objectives. Item-total correlation analysis and factor analysis confirmed the structural validity of the questionnaires, with no items requiring deletion.

Detailed analysis data for both questionnaires can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Pre-test Reliability, Validity, IOC, Item Analysis, and Factor Analysis.

| Analysis Item | Transformational Leadership Questionnaire | School Management Efficiency Questionnaire |
|--|--|---|
| IOC Assessment by experts | All items rated +1 | All items rated +1 |
| Item-Total Correlation (Pearson Correlation Range) | 0.423 – 0.800, all significant at < 0.01 | 0.558 – 0.877, all significant at < 0.01 |
| Item Analysis Results | Retained all items | Retained all items |
| Reliability Analysis Results | | |
| Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient | 0.923 | 0.758 |
| Reliability Level | Good | Good |
| Validity Analysis Results | | |
| KMO Value | 0.688 | 0.793 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | <0.001 | <0.001 |
| Significance Probability | | |
| Cumulative Variance Explained | 74.026% | 84.207% |
| Factor Loadings Range | 0.571–0.871 | 0.464–0.897 |
| Validity Level | Good | Good |
| Number of Items Deleted | 0 | 0 |

The analysis results for the official questionnaires demonstrate good reliability and validity for both the Transformational Leadership and School Management Efficiency questionnaires. The Cronbach's alpha values confirm the reliability, while the KMO values and significant Bartlett's tests support the structural validity of the questionnaires.

Detailed analysis data for these assessments can be found in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Official Questionnaire Reliability and Validity Results.

| Analysis Item | TL Questionnaire | SME Questionnaire |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Reliability Analysis Results | | |
| Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient | 0.868 | 0.792 |
| Reliability Level | Good | Good |
| Validity Analysis Results | | |
| KMO Value | 0.797 | 0.739 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | <0.001 | <0.001 |
| Significance Probability | | |
| Cumulative Variance Explained | 61.445% | 61.754% |
| Factor Loadings Range | 0.473–0.898 | 0.767–0.933 |
| Validity Level | Good | Good |

Phase 2: Qualitative Interviews After collecting quantitative data, this study conducted qualitative interviews with 10 administrators, including principals and vice-principals, to gain a deeper understanding of the practical aspects of transformational leadership and management efficiency. These interviews aim to explore how leaders apply transformational leadership in daily management, decision-making, and strategic planning, and how these applications improve the three dimensions of management efficiency: resource allocation, administrative processes, and academic outcomes. The interviews were conducted both online and face-to-face, utilizing content analysis to analyze the data and draft preliminary leadership strategies based on the insights gathered.

The interview design was based on the highest-scoring items from the quantitative analysis, selecting the top two items from each of the four dimensions of transformational leadership and the highest-scoring item from each of the three dimensions of management efficiency. Initially, this study conducted pre-test interviews with two participants and adjusted the interview form based on their feedback to ensure its validity and applicability. This approach enabled the study to delve

deeper into specific high-scoring areas, thus developing more effective transformational leadership strategies to enhance school management efficiency.

Phase 3: Evaluation and Refinement A focus group consisting of nine educational leadership experts evaluated the developed leadership approaches. These experts provide feedback through structured evaluation forms and group discussions, which were analyzed to refine and finalize the leadership strategies. The feedback and insights from experts help to define practical and effective leadership approaches for enhancing school management efficiency. Focus group discussions leveraged data from initial surveys and interviews to deepen insights into leadership strategies' effectiveness, enhancing the relevance of feedback.

This evaluation aligns with the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) standards—Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy—to ensure a robust and ethical evaluation process. An assessment tool designed according to these standards was employed, ensuring that the evaluation not only adheres to high ethical standards but also addresses the practical, methodological, and accuracy aspects required for sound educational research.

Research Results

Objective 1: The Results of Transformational Leadership of School Administrators and School Management Efficiency in Junior High Schools, Dengfeng, Henan, China

Descriptive statistical analysis was employed to calculate the mean and standard deviation for each research variable and to rank them accordingly. This study used a Likert five-point scale, ranging from "1" (strongly disagree) to "5" (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a greater alignment between participants' perceptions and descriptions. The Principal's Transformational Leadership Questionnaire is based on 4 dimensions of transformational leadership characteristics, with each dimension corresponding to 6 items, totaling 24 items coded as S1–S24.

Table 3 Basic Statistical Analysis of Principals' Transformational Leadership

| Dimension | Sample | Mean | S.D. | Rank |
|------------------------------|--------|---------------|----------------|------|
| Idealized Influence | 190 | 4.3254 | 0.52657 | 1 |
| Inspirational Motivation | 190 | 4.3105 | 0.52515 | 2 |
| Intellectual Stimulation | 190 | 3.8175 | 0.92568 | 4 |
| Individualized Consideration | 190 | 4.1825 | 0.79869 | 3 |
| Overall | | 4.1590 | 0.46889 | – |

From Table 3: Idealized Influence scores the highest, indicating that principals are highly recognized as ethical role models and inspirational leaders. This dimension shows a consistent level of recognition, reflecting a widespread acknowledgment among principals. Inspirational Motivation follows closely, demonstrating that principals are effective in motivating staff towards the school's vision and goals. Individualized Consideration ranks third, positively reflecting the principals' efforts to address and support individual staff needs and professional development. However, this dimension shows a larger variance, indicating variability in how different principals implement these strategies. Intellectual Stimulation scores the lowest with the greatest variability, suggesting that while principals are somewhat effective in promoting innovation and problem-solving, the impact varies significantly across schools, indicating a need for further enhancement in promoting continuous learning and innovation.

The "Idealized Influence" dimension, encompassing items S1 to S6, demonstrates the leader's ability to serve as a role model, inspiring and establishing ethical and professional behavior standards in the school environment. Principals are highly regarded in all aspects of idealized influence, particularly noted for acting as role models and inspiring staff through their actions (items S1 and S2). There is consistent recognition across different schools, though there is some room for improvement in enhancing discussions on ethical standards (item S4). Inspirational Motivation, with items S7 to S12, focuses on how leaders motivate and guide their staff towards achieving the school's vision and goals. Principals are highly regarded for their visionary leadership (S7, S8) and goal-setting capabilities (S9, S10). However, there is potential to enhance the use of positive reinforcement strategies (S12), which shows the lowest mean score and highest variability.

Intellectual stimulation, with items S13 to S18, is pivotal as it drives innovation and problem-solving, fostering an environment where continuous learning is promoted. While principals actively promote innovative thinking and problem-solving (S13, S15, S16), there is less emphasis on

continuous learning (S17, S18), suggesting a need for more focused efforts on sustainable educational practices. Individualized consideration, with items S19 to S24, reflects the leader's ability to recognize and respond to the individual needs and aspirations of staff. Principals are highly regarded in all aspects of individualized consideration, particularly in recognizing and responding to staff needs (S19, S20). There is potential for further enhancement in personal mentoring and support (S20), which shows the lowest mean score.

The School Management Efficiency Questionnaire is based on three dimensions of school management efficiency, with each dimension corresponding to four items, totaling 12 items coded as E1–E12.

Table 4 Basic Statistical Analysis of School Management Efficiency

| Dimension | Sample | Mean | S.D. | Rank |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| Resources Allocation | 190 | 3.9724 | 0.7691 | 2 |
| Administrative Processes | 190 | 3.7908 | 0.9251 | 3 |
| Academic Outcomes | 190 | 4.4737 | 0.5026 | 1 |
| Overall Management Efficiency | | 4.0723 | 0.7325 | – |

From Table 4: Academic outcomes score the highest, indicating a widespread consensus on the effectiveness of academic strategies and a high level of consistency across different schools. Resource Allocation ranks second, reflecting a generally positive evaluation of resource allocation efficiency, although there are some differences in perception among various institutions. Administrative processes score the lowest, showing significant variability in efficiency perceptions among schools. This suggests substantial room for improvement in administrative workflows.

Resources Allocation, with items E1 to E4, assesses the effectiveness of resource management in schools. Respondents view their schools as effective in the strategic and efficient allocation of resources (E4), but there is some variability in perceptions, suggesting different challenges across schools in resource management. Administrative Processes, with items E5 to E8, assesses the efficiency of school administrative processes. Respondents generally view administrative processes as effective in promoting task completion and decision-making (E5), but there is room for improvement in reducing operational costs and saving time (E6).

Academic outcomes, with items E9 to E12, evaluate the effectiveness of educational strategies and resource utilization in achieving significant academic results. School administrators

perceive their institutions as highly effective in achieving desired academic outcomes (E10), with consistent views among respondents. There is a robust positive perception regarding the effectiveness of teaching methods and curriculum settings (E9).

Objective 2: The Results of transformational leadership approaches of school administrators for improving school management efficiency in junior high schools, Dengfeng, Henan, China.

Through interviews with ten school principals, this study gathered valuable qualitative insights on transformational leadership and school management efficiency. The purpose of these interviews was to delve into how these principals apply transformational leadership theories in practice to enhance school management efficiency and educational outcomes. Below is a summary of the key approaches and strategies employed by the principals across different dimensions of transformational leadership and school management efficiency.

The interview design was based on the two highest average-scoring items in the four dimensions of transformational leadership and the highest average-scoring item in the three dimensions of management efficiency from the quantitative analysis. These dimensions are crucial for understanding the practical application of leadership and management strategies in educational settings. Below Table 5 is the Summary of Interview Keywords:

Table 5 Summary of Interview Keywords

| Dimension | Keywords |
|------------------------------|--|
| Idealized Influence | Ethical workshops, transparency, high stands, role model |
| Inspirational Motivation | Vision sharing, goal alignment, electronic communication, success stories |
| Intellectual Stimulation | Innovation labs, creative seminars, challenging conventions, academic exchange |
| Individualized Consideration | Career development, mental health seminars, one-on-one coaching, personalized support |
| Resource Allocation | Data-driven decisions, resource optimization, performance evaluation systems, dynamic management |
| Administrative Processes | ERP systems, electronic document management, process automation, transparency |
| Academic Achievements | Outcome assessment systems, regular monitoring, teaching |

Based on in-depth interviews with 10 school principals, this study developed preliminary approaches to enhance school management efficiency through transformational leadership. These draft approaches were then evaluated by a panel of nine educational leadership experts, who provided valuable feedback and suggestions for refinement.

Objective 3: Evaluation of Transformational Leadership Approaches of School Administrators to Improve School Management Efficiency

Phase 3 focused on validating and optimizing the drafted approaches through expert evaluation to enhance school management efficiency via transformational leadership. A focus group consisting of nine educational leadership experts was convened consisting of nine educational leadership experts to discuss and evaluate these approaches.

Data Analysis and Results: Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and content analysis. The analysis of the mean scores and standard deviations from the expert evaluations shows strong consensus and support for the drafted approaches, with high mean scores and relatively low standard deviations indicating robust approval. The detailed summary of these expert suggestions is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Summary of Expert Evaluation Suggestions Results

| Dimension | Summary of Expert Suggestions |
|------------------------------|--|
| Idealized Influence | Introduce more interactive elements and multimedia tools in ethical workshops to engage staff more effectively and reinforce ethical standards. |
| Inspirational Motivation | Enhance vision-sharing sessions with real-life success stories to boost motivation and provide clear examples of goal achievement. |
| Intellectual Stimulation | Expand support for innovation labs and creative seminars to foster a culture of innovation and encourage experimentation with new educational practices. |
| Individualized Consideration | Provide tailored support and resources, focusing on professional development and mental health, to address the diverse needs of staff. |
| Resource Allocation | Implement advanced analytics to ensure effective resource management, optimizing allocation in real-time based on changing school needs. |
| Administrative Processes | Integrate comprehensive training for ERP systems to enhance user engagement and streamline administrative processes more effectively. |
| Academic Achievements | Continue refining strategies to align resources with academic performance metrics to maximize educational outcomes effectively. |

This study evaluates transformational leadership approaches using an assessment tool designed according to the JCSEE standards—Utility, Feasibility, Propriety, and Accuracy. The evaluation, conducted by a focus group of nine educational leadership experts, utilized statistical analysis to calculate the mean and standard deviation (S.D.) for each dimension. The results showed that all four dimensions scored very high, with Utility and Propriety receiving particularly high marks. Idealized Influence and Academic Achievements achieved perfect scores. Additionally, the strategies demonstrated strong performance in Feasibility and Accuracy, indicating their practicality and effectiveness in enhancing school management efficiency and educational quality. Based on the experts' evaluations and professional recommendations, the draft approaches were adjusted and optimized, resulting in a complete and feasible set of approaches. This feasible set of approaches is detailed in the suggestions section of this paper.

Discussion

Transformational Leadership in School Management: This study found that principals of junior high schools in Dengfeng excel in the dimensions of idealized influence and inspirational motivation. This is consistent with the effects of transformational leadership as described by Smith and Jones (2018) and Bass and Avolio (1994). However, there is room for improvement in the areas of Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration, indicating that practices to promote innovative thinking among teachers and focus on individual development need to be strengthened.

School Management Efficiency: Although the schools perform well in resource allocation and academic outcomes, the efficiency of administrative processes shows room for improvement. This finding echoes the research by Wang et al. (2019), which emphasized the importance of optimizing management processes to enhance educational outcomes. Therefore, introducing advanced management information systems and optimizing decision processes could significantly improve the efficiency of administrative operations, thereby enhancing the overall management efficiency of schools.

Expert-Validated Leadership Approaches and Their Innovative Applications: The transformational leadership strategies developed in this study have not been widely discussed in the existing literature. Validated by an assessment from nine educational leadership experts, these strategies received effective verification and specific recommendations, such as incorporating interactive elements and multimedia tools in ethical workshops and enhancing personalized support

in individualized consideration. Feedback from these experts not only confirmed the practicality of these strategies but also highlighted their innovative potential in actual educational management. The innovation of this research lies in integrating these validated strategies with specific management practices in schools, providing empirical support for enhancing school management efficiency.

Future Directions for Approaches Implementation: Transformational leadership provides effective strategies to address complex challenges in educational management. Future research should explore how to customize and implement these leadership strategies in different educational environments and overcome cultural and structural barriers during implementation. Additionally, the applicability and effects of these strategies should be assessed in other regions or different types of schools to promote their broader application and development.

New Knowledge

The new knowledge generated from this research can be summarized as follows:

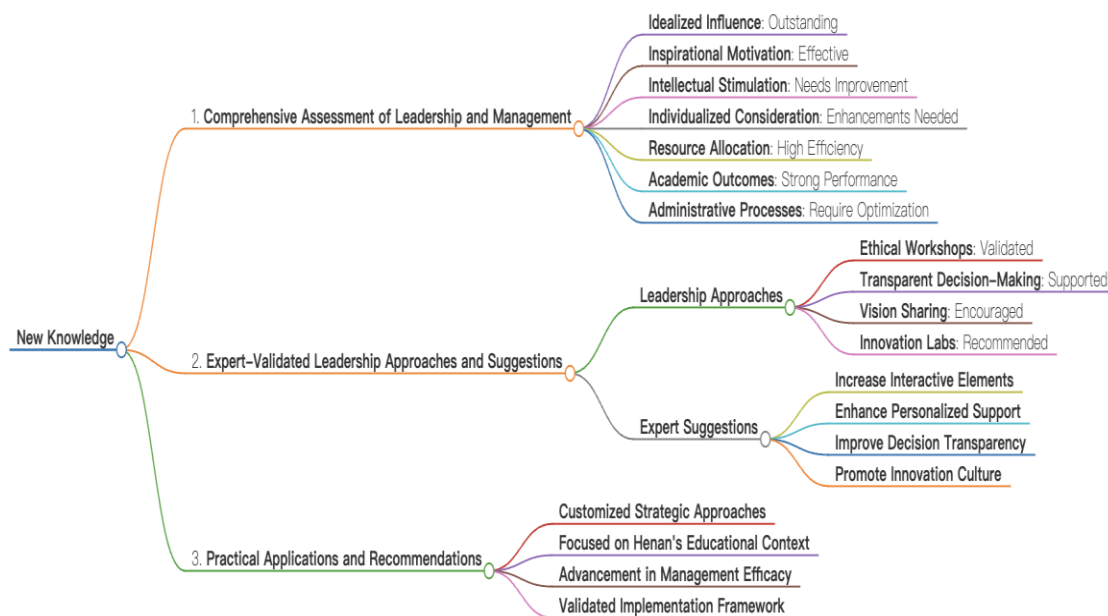


Figure 2 New Knowledge

1. Comprehensive Assessment and Development of Transformational Leadership and School Management Efficiency:

This research thoroughly evaluates the current state of transformational leadership among junior high school principals in Dengfeng, Henan, and explores the impact of four key leadership dimensions—Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized

Consideration—on school management. Through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study identifies specific strengths in Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation, while highlighting areas for improvement in Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration. Additionally, the research assesses three main dimensions of school management efficiency: Resource Allocation, Administrative Processes, and Academic Outcomes. It finds strong performance in academic outcomes and resource allocation, but significant variability and improvement needs in administrative processes.

2. Expert-Validated Leadership Approaches:

Incorporating feedback from a panel of educational leadership experts, this research ensures that the proposed transformational leadership strategies are not only theoretically sound but also practically implementable. The expert evaluation process underscores specific improvement suggestions, such as incorporating more interactive elements and multimedia tools in ethical workshops and enhancing personalized support for staff. The detailed content of these approaches is provided in the Suggestions section of this paper.

3. Application and Practical Recommendations:

By focusing on the specific context of junior high schools in Henan Province, this research provides tailored insights and practical recommendations that address the unique challenges and opportunities within the Chinese educational system. These contributions are significant for informing policy and practice in similar educational settings.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the transformational leadership of school administrators and school management efficiency in junior high schools in Dengfeng, Henan, China, and to develop and evaluate effective transformational leadership approaches to improve school management efficiency. Using both quantitative and qualitative analyses, this study reached the following main conclusions:

Through a survey of 190 school administrators, it was found that principals performed well in the four dimensions of transformational leadership (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration), especially in Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation. However, there is room for improvement in Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration. In terms of school management efficiency, schools performed well in resource allocation, administrative processes, and academic outcomes, with particularly outstanding

performance in academic outcomes, reflecting effective educational strategies and resource utilization. However, the efficiency of administrative processes is relatively low, indicating room for improvement in this area.

Through quantitative analysis and in-depth interviews, a series of transformational leadership approaches applicable to enhancing school management efficiency were developed. These approaches cover the four dimensions of transformational leadership (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration) and the three dimensions of school management efficiency (Resource Allocation, Administrative Processes, and Academic Outcomes). Specific strategies include regular ethical workshops, transparent decision-making, setting high standards, vision sharing, data-driven decision-making, ERP system implementation, and outcome assessment systems, all aimed at improving principals' leadership capabilities and school management efficiency. The proposed approaches were validated and optimized through expert evaluation to ensure their effectiveness and practicality in real-world applications. The expert evaluation results indicated high application potential, with specific improvement suggestions such as incorporating more interactive elements and multimedia tools and enhancing personalized support. This feasible set of approaches is detailed in the Suggestions section of this paper.

Suggestions

This study has developed feasible approaches to enhance school management efficiency through transformational leadership, validated and refined through expert evaluation. In alignment with the four dimensions of transformational leadership and the three dimensions of school management efficiency, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance school management efficiency:

1. Idealized Influence: School administrators should regularly conduct ethical workshops to enhance the moral standards and professional conduct of staff. These workshops should be interactive, utilizing multimedia tools to engage participants effectively. Emphasizing transparency in decision-making processes allows staff to understand and accept school policies clearly, which can be facilitated through regular staff meetings and public decision records. Additionally, principals should set high standards and lead by example to create an environment that fosters high-quality teaching.

2. Inspirational Motivation: It is crucial for principals to regularly share the school's development vision through various channels, such as meetings and emails, integrating real-life success stories to enhance the impact. Setting clear, consistent goals ensures that staff efforts are aligned with the school's long-term objectives. Additionally, utilizing electronic communication tools like emails and announcement systems helps maintain continuous communication of the school's vision and goals.

3. Intellectual Stimulation: The establishment of innovation labs is recommended to provide a space for teachers and students to experiment with new ideas. Organizing creative seminars would encourage the exploration of innovative teaching methods and management practices. Furthermore, promoting academic exchanges with other educational institutions can expand perspectives and stimulate a culture of innovation.

4. Individualized Consideration: Developing personalized career development plans and providing tailored support are essential for continuous staff growth. Organizing mental health seminars and providing one-on-one coaching can address individual needs and promote well-being within the staff.

5. Resource Allocation: Implementing data-driven decision-making systems optimizes resource allocation effectively. Dynamic management platforms should be used to adjust resource allocation in real time based on changing educational needs. Performance evaluation systems are also recommended to ensure the effectiveness of resource distribution.

6. Administrative Processes: Introducing ERP systems can streamline and automate administrative tasks, increasing efficiency. The use of electronic document management systems can reduce paperwork and expedite information processing. Automating processes will also reduce human errors and speed up decision-making.

7. Academic Outcomes: Outcome assessment systems should be implemented to monitor and analyze academic results regularly. Regular monitoring ensures that teaching strategies and resource allocation align with the school's educational goals. Adjusting teaching strategies based on assessment results can enhance teaching effectiveness and improve educational quality.

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