

## EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT INFLUENCING FACTORS IN HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGES: INSIGHTS INTO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors influencing transformational leadership in Chinese vocational colleges, identifying five critical elements: leadership vision, innovation stimulation, team collaboration, career development, and fair evaluation mechanisms. Through an extensive literature review, it is revealed that each of these factors plays a pivotal role in shaping the leadership dynamics within vocational colleges. Leadership vision provides a guiding framework that aligns faculty and staff with institutional goals, while innovation stimulation fosters a culture of creativity and continuous improvement, ensuring responsiveness to industry changes. Team collaboration promotes collective effort and mutual responsibility, essential for achieving institutional objectives and enhancing teaching quality. Career development programs are vital for the professional growth and retention of teachers, ensuring their expertise aligns with industry demands. Lastly, fair evaluation mechanisms are crucial for maintaining trust, accountability, and professional growth, motivating teachers to improve their teaching practices. The findings highlight how these factors collectively contribute to the development of transformational leadership, influencing both administrators and teachers, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and student outcomes in Chinese vocational colleges.

**Keywords:** Educational Management, Transformational Leadership, Influencing Factors

### INTRODUCTION

With the rapid evolution of the global socio-economic landscape and ongoing adjustments to industrial structures, the field of vocational education is confronted with increasingly complex challenges (Zhao et al., 2022). Transformational leadership, distinguished by its emphasis on motivation, innovation, and collaboration, has gained widespread application in educational management worldwide (Meng, 2022). Research by scholars such as Carpio-M (2023) underscores the significant success of transformational leadership, particularly in developed countries, where it has played a pivotal role in driving educational reform and improving management efficacy. This leadership approach has been shown to effectively stimulate educators' creativity, enhance student motivation, and promote the overall development of educational institutions (Carpio-Mendoza et al., 2023). Moreover, studies by Ge & Su (2024) and Mbithi (2021) underscore that, despite the successes observed in certain countries, higher education systems in many developing regions—particularly within the vocational education sector—continue to confront significant challenges. These challenges include underdeveloped leadership structures and education management frameworks that remain misaligned with the evolving demands of society (Ge & Su, 2024; Mbithi et al., 2021). Consequently, the investigation and implementation of transformational leadership in diverse contexts, particularly within developing countries such as China,

has become a pivotal area of focus in global educational reform. The research currently in publication is a notable deficiency in comprehensive analyses of the factors influencing transformational leadership in existing literature, particularly with regard to the effective application of educational management and leadership practices. While management systems and leadership roles are undergoing ongoing transformations, there remains a significant gap in research concerning the factors that shape leadership decision-making in higher vocational colleges (Shaonan et al., 2024). Addressing this research gap is essential for advancing educational reform and enhancing the quality of education. The research titled "Educational Management Influencing Factors in Higher Vocational Colleges: Insights into Transformational Leadership" aims to address this issue by analyzing the educational management influences that shape their views on transformational leadership within higher vocational colleges. This research will inform organizations in developing educational management leadership programs that align with values and expectations. Moreover, it will establish a basis for subsequent research on leadership development within a swiftly changing vocational education reform.

**Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT)**, James MacGregor Burns initially introduced transformational leadership in 1978, and Bernard M. Bass expanded upon it in 1985. Bass's work distinguished transformational leadership from transactional leadership and explored its application in various organizational settings, including education (Bass, B. M. 1985). Bass's theory focuses on the leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers to exceed expectations by fostering a vision, providing individualized support, and stimulating intellectual growth. The dimensions of transformational leadership outlined by Bass are: Idealized Influence (charisma), Inspirational Motivation (vision), Intellectual Stimulation (creativity), Individualized Consideration (support for followers).

TLE provides significant insights vocational education, Bass's model is particularly relevant as it emphasizes the importance of teacher motivation, individualized development, and innovation, all of which are crucial in dynamic, skill-based educational environments like vocational colleges.

The highlights of the disparity in interactions between managers and teachers require managers and teachers to undergo qualitative changes in their transformational leadership to meet the development needs of vocational education.

**Framework of Transformational Leadership (FTL)**, formulated by Leithwood (1994), Leithwood's transformational leadership model, developed in the context of educational leadership, builds on the work of Bass and Burns but adds specific components focused on improving school effectiveness and leadership. Leithwood's framework is particularly valuable for understanding leadership in educational settings, including vocational schools. The key views and Influence: Leithwood identifies four key dimensions of transformational leadership: Building Vision and Setting Directions: Leaders in schools set clear goals and focus on vision-building. Understanding and Developing People: Leaders help teachers and staff grow professionally through support and personalized development. Redesigning the Organization: Transformational leaders create systems that facilitate change and innovation in school structures. Managing the Instructional Program: Leaders provide guidance to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Leithwood's emphasis on the importance of setting a clear vision and providing professional development has been influential in studies exploring how leaders in vocational schools can enhance the quality of education and align it with industry needs.

Wilson (2023) highlighted the distinction between formal and informal leadership in modern definitions. Formal leadership is grounded in organizational structure and positional authority, addressing functional organizational needs. In contrast, informal leadership is based on personal influence and relational networks, prioritizing collaboration and cooperation among team members (Wilson, 2023, p. 106).

Regarding the subject "Educational Management Influencing Factors in Higher Vocational Colleges: Insights into Transformational Leadership" Wilson elucidates how transformative leadership for administrators and teachers in professional education is important, particularly impacting their work-life balance and personal vitality. Strategic management that enhances resource assurance and renewal can significantly elevate their willingness to assume transformative professional education leadership.

**Change Leadership Theory (CLT)**, Michael Fullan's Change Leadership Theory focuses on the dynamics of educational reform and leadership, specifically in the context of large-scale changes. His theory highlights the role of leadership in driving change in schools and improving the quality of teaching and learning (Fullan, M. 2001) Fullan's model stresses the importance of leadership in promoting change, particularly: Commitment to Change: Leaders must create a shared vision and commitment to change

among all staff members. Capacity Building: Leaders help teachers develop the skills and knowledge needed to implement change. Sustainability: Long-term, sustainable change requires continuous learning and adaptation. Collaborative Leadership: Effective leadership involves fostering collaboration between staff, students, and the community. For vocational education, Fullan's emphasis on collaboration and sustainability in leadership is critical. Vocational schools, often facing rapid changes in industry requirements, benefit from leaders who foster change in a strategic and sustainable manner. Subsequent research expanded this idea, Abdullah, and Jamaludin (2021) emphasize that principals who clearly communicate the school's vision and encourage teachers to integrate this vision into their teaching practices not only increase teacher engagement but also strengthen their sense of mission. When principals effectively convey their vision and ensure that teachers understand their role in achieving these goals, it often leads to active teacher participation in school reforms and innovations (Mansor et al., 2021). Riswanti Rini (2022) highlights that vision communication involves more than verbal motivation; it requires demonstrative actions. Principals, through concrete actions and communication, can help teachers connect the school's vision with their personal teaching practices, thereby stimulating their enthusiasm for work (Riswanti Rini, 2022). The idea elucidates how transformational leadership's unique beliefs influence their perception of leadership positions as an attribute of their own abilities. Identifying these differences is crucial for formulating programs that effectively encourage Generation teachers to assume leadership roles.

**Teacher Professional Identity Theory (TPIT)** This Theory by Day and Kington is centered on the relationship between teacher professional identity and leadership (Day, C., & Kington, A. 2008). It emphasizes that transformational leadership must align with the development of teachers' professional identity, which is crucial for improving teacher motivation and performance. Day and Kington's model posits that the development of a teacher's professional identity is intertwined with transformational leadership practices. The theory includes:

Teacher Professional Identity: Teachers' perceptions of their roles, their values, and their approach to teaching. Leadership and Support: Effective leadership shapes and supports the development of teachers' professional identities through recognition, autonomy, and professional growth opportunities. Impact on Student Outcomes: Teachers who have strong professional identities, supported by transformational leadership, positively affect student learning outcomes. In the context of vocational schools, this model helps in understanding how leadership can shape teachers' sense of professional purpose, which is crucial in practical, skill-based training environments. Ottery (2001) discusses the challenges of implementing transformational leadership models in the UK educational context due to globalization pressures and government responses. Ross et. al. (2006) explores the relationship between transformational leadership and teacher commitment to organizational values, mediated by collective teacher efficacy. Margolin (2007) presents a study on building a new personal concept of leadership through action research to shape a new professional identity. Cregan et. al. (2009) investigates the impact of union organizing and transformational leadership on the collectivism of union members. Thoonen et. al. (2011) examines the influence of transformational leadership practices on teaching practices in elementary schools in the Netherlands. Boylan (2016) discusses the concept of system leadership and its relation to teacher activist professional identity. Sinha et. al. (2017) conducts a multiple case study on the development of teacher leadership identity. Frost (2019) emphasizes the importance of distributed leadership in empowering teachers as agents of change. Zeng (2019) highlights the role of transformative leadership in building professional learning communities and changing teacher identity for social justice. PIT theory posits that the quality of relationships between professional leadership and existing organizational leaders may considerably influence their hesitance to adopt leadership positions. Fostering healthy relationships and offering suitable assistance may encourage managers to undertake leadership responsibilities.

### **Education management influencing Factors**

**Leadership Vision** is a fundamental component of transformational leadership, particularly in the context of vocational colleges. A well-defined and compelling vision not only provides direction and purpose but also shapes the institution's future trajectory, guiding both faculty and students toward achieving a shared goal (Leithwood, 2006). In vocational colleges, where the alignment with industry needs and the focus on employability are critical, the role of a visionary leader becomes even more significant. Transformational leaders in these institutions must articulate a vision that not only aligns with the institution's mission but also responds to the evolving demands of the industry and the expectations of students. This vision becomes the foundation for a collective effort, motivating faculty

members to transcend routine tasks and commit to the institution's long-term success. It fosters a sense of shared responsibility and enhances organizational coherence, ensuring that every member of the institution is working toward common goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In China, where vocational education plays a key role in supporting economic development and addressing employment challenges, the ability of leaders to craft and communicate a compelling vision is essential for driving institutional progress. In the Chinese context, visionary leadership becomes particularly crucial in aligning educational practices with the demands of the labor market. A clear vision motivates educators to innovate teaching methods, develop curricula that meet current industry standards, and prepare students with skills that are directly applicable to their careers. Zeng (2019) highlights that effective leadership in Chinese vocational colleges requires leaders to actively engage with industry trends, incorporate feedback from employers, and develop strategic partnerships that ensure students' employability upon graduation. Furthermore, a well-articulated vision aids in managing the changes and challenges associated with educational reforms, which are particularly prominent in Chinese vocational colleges. The Chinese government has been pushing for a "dual-system" approach to vocational education, combining both theoretical and practical learning (Li & Wu, 2020). A visionary leader can guide the institution through such transitions, ensuring that reforms align with both educational goals and industry expectations. This leadership approach not only positions the institution as a frontrunner in vocational education but also contributes to the broader goal of bridging the skills gap in the labor market. Ultimately, in the rapidly changing landscape of vocational education in China, a clear and inspiring leadership vision serves as the backbone of institutional development. It enables vocational colleges to remain agile, innovative, and responsive to the demands of both students and industry, ensuring their relevance and success in a competitive educational environment.

**Innovation Stimulation** Innovation stimulation is a critical aspect of transformational leadership, particularly in vocational colleges, where the ability to adapt to changing technologies and industry demands is paramount. A transformational leader who fosters innovation creates an environment that encourages creativity, experimentation, and the exploration of new ideas. This is essential for the continuous improvement of teaching practices and the overall advancement of the institution. By motivating faculty members to adopt new pedagogies, integrate emerging technologies, and experiment with teaching methods, such leaders play a central role in shaping the future of vocational education (Robinson & Judge, 2013). In vocational colleges, innovation stimulation serves dual purposes. On one hand, it enhances the quality and relevance of teaching practices, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving job market. On the other hand, it enables the institution to remain agile and responsive to changes within various industries, thus improving graduates' employability. Harris and Spillane (2008) argue that innovation is a driving force that strengthens the institution's capacity to respond to labor market needs. In China, where economic development is closely tied to industrial transformation, vocational colleges must continuously update curricula to reflect technological advancements and new industry standards. Leaders who prioritize innovation create the conditions for these updates, ensuring that the education provided remains aligned with current and future workforce demands. Frost (2019) highlights that Chinese vocational colleges, especially in the context of the country's ongoing push for modernization and digitalization, must foster a culture of innovation to remain competitive. Technological advancements in fields such as manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and digital services require frequent curriculum revisions. Transformational leaders who stimulate innovation not only ensure that teaching content stays relevant but also inspire faculty members to integrate new technologies and teaching strategies into their classrooms. Moreover, innovation stimulation plays a vital role in cultivating a growth mindset among educators. Transformational leaders support faculty members in their professional development by encouraging experimentation and rewarding risk-taking. As teachers engage with innovative approaches, they enhance their own skills and performance, which, in turn, leads to increased job satisfaction and a sense of professional fulfillment. By creating an environment that values and supports innovation, these leaders build a motivated and committed teaching workforce. In conclusion, innovation stimulation is essential for the continued success of vocational colleges. It not only enhances teaching quality but also ensures that the institution remains responsive to the ever-changing needs of the job market. In the Chinese context, where industrial upgrades and technological advancements are a constant, transformational leaders who promote innovation will enable vocational colleges to stay at the forefront of educational progress, improving both the educational experience and the employability of graduates.

**Team Collaboration** Team collaboration is a key aspect of transformational leadership, emphasizing the collective effort of educators working toward shared goals. In vocational colleges, effective collaboration enables faculty to enhance student learning outcomes, improve teaching practices, and contribute to the institution's overall development. Transformational leaders foster a collaborative culture by creating an environment built on trust, respect, and open communication (Leithwood et al., 2004). When educators collaborate, they share best practices, bring diverse perspectives, and develop creative solutions to teaching challenges (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). In Chinese vocational colleges, where aligning educational programs with industry needs is crucial, team collaboration between faculty, students, and industry partners plays a vital role. Transformational leaders who promote collaboration help create industry-relevant curricula, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills that meet labor market demands (Geijsel et al., 2009). Furthermore, fostering collaboration encourages professional development, as educators can learn from one another's experiences and expertise. This collaborative approach not only improves teaching quality but also strengthens the institution's ties with industry, which is essential for enhancing the employability of graduates.

**Career Development** Career development is a cornerstone of transformational leadership, reflecting the leader's commitment to fostering the personal and professional growth of faculty members. By investing in career development, transformational leaders cultivate loyalty, motivation, and a sense of purpose among their staff (Northouse, 2010). In vocational colleges, opportunities for professional growth—such as development programs, mentorship, and clear career pathways—enhance teachers' skills, knowledge, and overall job satisfaction, leading to improved teaching quality and greater engagement with the institution's mission (García et al., 2018). In China's vocational education system, where national reforms emphasize professional development and leadership roles within institutions, transformational leaders play a pivotal role in shaping career development programs. These programs not only align with national educational reforms but also prepare faculty for leadership positions, encouraging teachers to continually engage in professional learning (Chen, 2021). By prioritizing career growth, transformational leaders ensure that vocational colleges remain responsive to both educational reforms and the evolving needs of the workforce, thus contributing to long-term institutional success.

**Fair Evaluation Mechanisms** Fair evaluation mechanisms are crucial for establishing a culture of accountability, transparency, and trust within educational institutions. Transformational leaders who implement equitable and objective evaluation systems ensure that faculty members feel their contributions are recognized and valued. This recognition boosts job satisfaction, reduces turnover, and motivates faculty to align their work with the institution's vision (Day et al., 2009). Additionally, fair evaluations provide constructive feedback that drives professional growth, helping teachers improve their skills and effectiveness in the classroom (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In vocational colleges, where teaching quality is directly tied to student employability, fair evaluation systems are essential for maintaining high educational standards. Transformational leaders who prioritize fairness in evaluations not only enhance faculty morale but also ensure that the institution's teaching practices align with industry requirements. This leads to improved student outcomes and strengthens the institution's reputation in the competitive vocational education landscape (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Ultimately, fair evaluation systems contribute to a positive working environment, promoting a culture of continuous improvement that benefits both faculty and students.

## CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership is crucial for the growth and effectiveness of educational institutions, particularly vocational colleges in China. A review of the literature identifies five key factors influencing transformational leadership: leadership vision, innovation stimulation, team collaboration, career development, and fair evaluation mechanisms. Each of these elements fosters motivation, engagement, and professional growth among faculty and administrators. A clear and compelling vision aligns faculty and staff with the institution's mission and long-term goals, motivating them to improve student outcomes and adapt to industry demands. Visionary leadership gives purpose, essential in a rapidly evolving educational environment. Innovation is central to transformational leadership, as leaders who encourage creativity and continuous improvement ensure that vocational colleges stay relevant and responsive to labor market needs. Collaboration is vital for fostering a culture of shared responsibility. Leaders who promote teamwork help faculty work together towards common goals, share knowledge, and collaborate with industry partners to ensure curricula meet job market requirements. Career development programs, focusing on mentorship and skills enhancement, are also essential for faculty

retention and professional growth, ensuring teachers have the expertise to prepare students for industry demands. Fair evaluation practices maintain trust and accountability. Transparent evaluation systems boost morale, encourage professional development, and improve teaching quality. Together, these factors shape transformational leadership in Chinese vocational colleges, promoting a motivated, innovative teaching workforce.

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