

Creating a Positive Organizational Culture through Transformational Leadership

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Abstract: This study examined the transformational qualities of leaders and their impact on organizational culture within schools. A total of 371 participants were proportionately sampled across four schools. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: Implement Leadership Development Programs: Focus on enhancing emotional intelligence, effective communication, and adaptability among school leaders to foster a more responsive and supportive environment. Enhance Cultural Competence and Adaptive Management: Develop initiatives aimed at increasing cultural awareness and flexibility within leadership practices to better address diverse school communities. Seek Employee Feedback: Regularly gather input from staff to identify gaps in leadership effectiveness and pinpoint areas that require improvement. Launch Mentorship Programs: Pair less experienced leaders with seasoned transformational leaders to promote knowledge transfer and create a nurturing leadership culture within schools.

Keywords: Positive Organizational Culture; Transformational Leadership; Clear Vision; Empowerment and Support.

1. Introduction

Private ordinary institutions of higher learning in China are higher education institutions and educational organizations established by enterprises, social groups, and individuals using non-state fiscal education funds. These institutions offer both undergraduate and graduate education, including independent private colleges. China encourages the establishment of these educational institutions by social forces to supplement the state's compulsory education system.

The state strictly controls the establishment of higher education institutions by social forces through a system of school-running permits. Education administrative departments at various levels issue these permits to approved institutions according to prescribed authority.

As of 2022, China had a total of 764 private colleges, accounting for 25.36% of the total number of colleges and universities in the country. This includes 390 ordinary undergraduate schools, 22 undergraduate vocational schools, 350 higher vocational (junior college) schools, and 2 adult higher education schools. The total number of students in private ordinary and vocational undergraduate schools reached 9.2489 million, an increase of 791,500 over the previous year, accounting for 25.27% of the total number of ordinary and vocational undergraduate students in the country.

Guangdong University of Science and Technology has demonstrated a continuous upward trend. From 2021 to 2023, it ranked first in the "Comprehensive Competitiveness Ranking of China's Private Ordinary Undergraduate Colleges" by Jinpingguo for three consecutive years. During these years, it was also rated as one of the "Top Applied Universities in China" by the Alumni Association of Aeras, and ranked 12th, 11th, and 10th respectively among comprehensive (type II) private universities in China.

In the 2023 "China Mainland University Third-party Comprehensive Index Ranking" by the Southern Education Think Tank, Guangdong University of Science and Technology ranked 43rd among all public undergraduate colleges in the province and first among private

undergraduate colleges in the province.

Amid the general trend of strengthening connotation construction and development in private colleges and universities, Guangdong University of Science and Technology must continue to distinguish itself from dozens of private colleges and universities with comparable strength and influence nationwide.

Private higher education in China is currently undergoing a significant transition from outward expansion to a focus on high-quality internal development. This shift is crucial for private colleges to pursue a path characterized by connotation, specialization, high-end, and sustainable development. Key aspects of this transition include emphasizing the public welfare of education and maintaining flexible mechanisms. For profit-oriented private schools, it is essential to navigate the "reasonable return" legal framework, ensuring the correct direction in school management and high-quality talent training under the law. This approach aims to guide private higher education in China towards a diversified, high-end, and globalized development path.

Guangdong University of Science and Technology (GUST) exemplifies this development trajectory. With over 20 years of growth, GUST has steadily enhanced its educational strength, social reputation, and influence. The university has received numerous accolades, including being named one of China's excellent private higher education institutions, one of the "two new" top 100 party organizations in Guangdong Province, and one of the top ten competitive units among private colleges and universities in Guangdong Province. Additionally, GUST was recognized as a "contribution institution" for the 40th anniversary of private education in Guangdong Province.

In 2021, the university was approved as a pilot school for deepening the reform of education evaluation in the new era of Guangdong Province. By 2023, it was designated as a demonstration school for party building work in Guangdong Province and selected as one of the first batch of healthy school construction units nationwide. Consistently ranking among the top universities in Guangdong in various

evaluations, GUST's achievements underscore its commitment to excellence.

In this context, the researcher aimed to explore how transformational leadership could shape the organizational culture at Guangdong University of Science and Technology (GUST). This study provided insights into the role of leadership in fostering an environment conducive to high performance and sustainable development.

Transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping an organization's culture. Transformational leaders inspire a shared vision for the school and promote student learning through student-centered pedagogies like project-based learning, which enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and self-confidence (Barlis, Maris, 2024). They empower and support students and teachers in finding solutions to challenges as they arise. This empowerment paves the way for a positive learning environment. When students and teachers feel empowered and supported, they feel valued and motivated, leading to job satisfaction and increased productivity (Transformational Leadership, 2023).

Strengthening the organizational culture of private schools can influence the quality of education, teacher and student satisfaction, and the school's reputation. Improving the organizational culture can help schools achieve their goals and meet the challenges of educational reform and innovation. However, strengthening the organizational culture of private schools in China can be challenging, as these schools face various pressures and constraints from the government, the market, and society. This requires a type of leadership that inspires, empowers teachers, and fosters a collaborative culture.

A literature review by Hou et al. (2024) found that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact on private K12 schools in China. It helps them adapt to the demands of educational reforms and contributes to the overall development and progress of the school.

Transformational leaders exhibit four key characteristics.

Innovation Encouragement: Transformational leaders encourage followers to innovate and form new ideas for both the organization and themselves.

Coaching and Mentorship: They act as coaches and mentors, providing proactive feedback and guidance to each follower.

Clear Communication of Vision: These leaders communicate a clear and compelling vision that aligns with the goals and values of their followers.

Trust and Respect: They earn the trust and respect of their followers and inspire them to emulate their example.

Transformational leaders create a clear vision of educational outcomes and strategies, empower and support teachers to implement effective practices, and focus on student learning and well-being.

Transformational leadership in schools involves inspiring and empowering both staff and students. Leaders articulate a compelling vision for the school, outlining a future direction, setting goals, and fostering a shared sense of purpose. According to Heenan et al. (2023), transformational leaders empower staff and students by providing individualized support, encouraging growth, and aligning objectives. They create an environment where everyone feels valued and capable of contributing to the school's success (Chooma & Ugochukwu, 2024).

This leadership style positively impacts student learning outcomes. By fostering motivation, engagement, and a

positive school culture, transformational leaders contribute to higher achievement and stronger classroom communities (Lindsey, Feltis, & Mason, 2021).

Researching the influence of transformational leadership on the organizational culture of academic institutions is valuable for several reasons. Transformational leadership has been shown to elicit above-average performance from employees. By understanding its impact, organizations can enhance productivity and achieve better results. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers, fostering cooperation, reducing workplace conflict, and boosting effectiveness.

Research on this leadership style helps organizations cultivate engaged and committed employees (Telloian & Courtney, 2022). Additionally, transformational leadership positively affects employee commitment, job satisfaction, and satisfaction with leaders. Understanding these outcomes can guide leadership practices and contribute to organizational success.

Research on transformational leadership sheds light on effective leadership practices, employee engagement, and organizational performance. By exploring how transformational leaders influence organizational culture, researchers gain valuable insights into fostering positive change within academic institutions.

Transformational leadership, as studied by Bernard Bass, emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to achieve remarkable results. It involves four key components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These leaders create a culture that aligns with their vision, fostering growth and responsibility among team members.

This study aimed to explore whether an organization's culture significantly impacts leadership, just as leadership shapes the culture.

2. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the influence of transformational leadership in the organizational culture of Private college and universities

(1) Profile of the Respondents

1) Age

2) Length of Service

3) Educational Attainment

(2) What is the assessment of the teacher respondents on the transformational leadership of the school leaders in terms of:

1) Clear Vision

2) Empowerment and Support

3) Student Learning

(3) What is the assessment of the teacher respondents on the effect of transformational leadership on school organizational culture in terms of:

1) Internal Parent Involvement

2) Recognition of Student Achievements

3) Teacher Leadership

4) Promotion of Teachers' Professional Growth

(4) Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the respondents on the influence of transformational leadership on organizational culture when grouped according to their profile variables?

(5) Does transformational leadership influence the organizational culture of the academic institution?

(6) Based on the results of the study, what training program

can be developed to promote an effective organizational culture in private institutions in selected schools in China?

3. Hypothesis

H1: There is no significant difference in the assessment of the respondents regarding the influence of transformational leadership on school organizational culture when they are grouped according to their profile variables.

4. Research Design

This research used a descriptive research design to outline the characteristics of the population, with frequencies and averages serving as the statistical treatments. Additionally, a comparative research design was employed to determine if

there were significant differences in respondents' assessments of the influence of transformational leadership on organizational culture, based on their profile variables. A predictive, correlational research design was also used to examine the influence of organizational culture on the academic institution. This approach helped the researcher gain insights into complex, real-world phenomena and make informed predictions.

5. Results, Analysis, and Interpretation

Profile Of The Respondents In Terms Of Sex And Academic Programs?

Table 1. Frequencies and Percentage of Demographic Factors

Age		Counts		% of Total	
22-27		95		26 %	
28-33		84		23 %	
34-39		70		19 %	
40 and up		122		33 %	
Length of Service					
11-17 years		75		20 %	
18-34 years		48		13 %	
35 and above		40		11 %	
4-10 years		208		56 %	
Position					
Department Management		37		10 %	
Organizational Management		47		13 %	
Researcher		8		2 %	
Teacher		279		75 %	

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentages of demographic information for the selected school personnel, including age, tenure, and job title.

Age: The distribution of respondents by age shows that 26% were between the ages of 22 and 27, 23% were aged 28 to 33, 19% were aged 34 to 39, and 33% were 40 years or older. This indicates that a majority of the participants are 40 years old or above.

Tenure: Regarding tenure, 20% of respondents had served between 11 and 17 years, 13% had served for 18 to 34 years, 11% had served for 35 years or more, and 56% had served between 4 and 10 years. This suggests that most of the school staff have between 4 and 10 years of service.

Lastly, based on position, 10% of respondents hold department management positions, 13% hold organizational management positions, 2% are researchers, and 75% are teachers. This analysis indicates that the vast majority of the respondents are teachers.

The relationship between age, years of service, and teaching efficacy is a significant area of focus in educational

research. While age is sometimes linked with experience, it represents a broad spectrum in the teaching profession. Older teachers often bring a wealth of personal and professional experiences that enhance their teaching methods and classroom management (Podolsky et al., 2019). Their long tenure in the field typically reflects a strong commitment to educational values, which contributes to creating a stable and consistent learning environment for students.

According to Kelchtermans (2019), newer educators are more likely to bring fresh perspectives and innovative pedagogical practices to the classroom, which can enhance the learning experience. These teachers tend to be more attuned to evolving educational tools and modern teaching methods, enabling them to effectively engage a generation of digital natives.

However, it is important to recognize that age and length of service do not necessarily correlate with teaching success or student outcomes. Effective teaching is a complex process influenced by factors such as continuous professional development, adaptability, and the ability to engage with

students (Keay et al., 2019). It is essential for educational institutions to cultivate an inclusive environment that values both the experience of seasoned educators and the fresh perspectives of newer teachers. Ultimately, a harmonious blend of diverse experiences can significantly enhance the educational landscape and, in turn, improve student achievement.

6. Conclusion

1) Respondents' ratings of transformational leadership can yield either significant or average results. Transformational leadership, defined as the ability to inspire and motivate followers to achieve exceptional outcomes, is crucial for driving organizational success. High ratings suggest a deeply embedded culture of effective leadership that fosters innovation, employee engagement, and high performance. In contrast, average ratings may signal underlying issues that could hinder organizational growth and employee satisfaction.

2) The moderate impact of transformational leadership suggests that leaders must adopt a multifaceted approach to cultural development. Organizations seeking to enhance their cultural landscape should recognize that transformational leadership cannot function in isolation. Leaders must also address other key aspects of organizational life, such as employee engagement, communication strategies, and structural frameworks. This holistic approach amplifies the impact of transformational leadership by aligning organizational practices and values with the leader's aspirational vision.

3) According to the Tukey post-hoc test results, teachers aged 28-33, 34-39, and 40 and older report more favorable assessments of transformational leadership, particularly regarding clear vision, student learning, and overall effectiveness. These differing perspectives highlight the need for tailored professional development programs that address the unique needs of each age group. For younger teachers, mentorship programs led by experienced educators can help deepen their understanding of leadership's complexities. In contrast, professional development for mid-career and senior teachers should include empirical evidence and case studies that showcase successful transformational practices, fostering a culture of continuous learning.

4) Transformational leadership has a positive influence on organizational culture. Leaders who embody transformational qualities promote a shared vision and values, enhancing cohesion within the workforce. By articulating a compelling vision, these leaders not only motivate employees but also align individual contributions with organizational goals, fostering a culture of commitment and engagement. This alignment reduces resistance to change, as employees are more likely to embrace new initiatives when they see their relevance within the broader organizational context.

7. Recommendation

Based on the results, the researcher recommends the following:

1) Establish leadership development programs to equip leaders with the skills necessary for transformational leadership. These programs should emphasize emotional intelligence, effective communication, and adaptability.

2) Encourage proactive employee input to identify gaps in leadership effectiveness and areas for improvement. By fostering open communication, leaders can align their policies

with employee expectations, promoting a culture of transparency and trust.

3) Launch mentorship programs that connect less experienced leaders with seasoned transformational leaders. This facilitates knowledge transfer and cultivates a supportive leadership framework.

4) Develop comprehensive leadership training programs that go beyond transformational leadership principles to include emotional intelligence, cultural competence, and adaptive management. This training ensures leaders are prepared to navigate organizational complexities and implement change effectively.

5) Invest in leadership development programs that emphasize transformational leadership principles and establish mechanisms for regular employee feedback. By equipping leaders to inspire, mentor, and facilitate open communication, and by fostering an environment of openness through feedback loops, the organization can strengthen its cultural foundation. This approach not only empowers employees but also reinforces their role as active participants in shaping the organizational culture, ensuring leaders remain attuned to employee needs and concerns.

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